

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1223 00213 5748



7431

3 1223 00213 5748

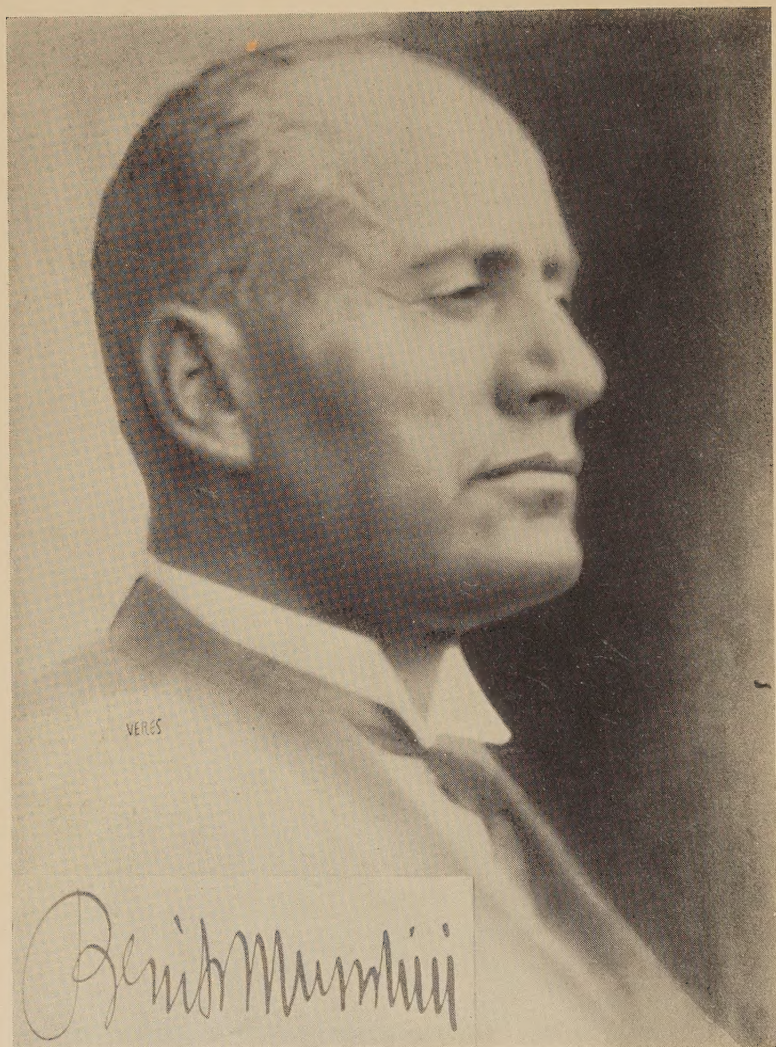
BOOK NO.

B M978k 1930

ACCESSION

496979





IL DUCE

[*Photograph by Veres*]

66 IL DUCE 99

The Life and Work of

BENITO MUSSOLINI

TRANSLATED BY MAGDA VAMOS

FROM THE HUNGARIAN OF

L. KEMECHEY



RICHARD R. SMITH

INCORPORATED
NEW YORK

Published in the United States 1930

B
M 978 *ke*
1930
496979

UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED

Printed in Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING

“To live working
To die fighting . . .”

MUSSOLINI

CONTENTS

PREFACE

page 9

PART I

THE NEW MAN

CHAPTER

I. THE SON OF THE REVOLUTIONIST	19
II. THE LAD	22
III. EXPELLED FROM PARADISE	25
IV. SPRING-TIDE	29
V. OVER NEW SEAS	33
VI. A LETTER	35
VII. THE NIGHT ASYLUM	41
VIII. INTERMEZZO	46
IX. IN MOURNING	48
X. MACHIAVELLI AND THE POET	50
XI. "CLASS-WAR"	52
XII. THE FIRST REVOLUTION	59
XIII. BEFORE THE COURTS	63
XIV. THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE "AVANTI"	66
XV. THE DEATH VIGIL	73
XVI. WAR	75
XVII. THE KNIGHT-ERRANT	77
XVIII. "IL POPOLO D'ITALIA"	83

PART II

THE CONDOTTIERE

I. THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER	91
II. "I WILL NOT DIE"	97
III. NO RETREAT	99
IV. WILSON OR LENIN?	106
V. THE ORGANIZER OF THE FASCI	112
VI. "INITIUM TUMULTUS"	118
VII. "CANNIBAL ANTE PORTAS"	124
VIII. "BELLUM CIVILE"	128
IX. THREE MEN—THREE OPINIONS	143
X. THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND FACETS	145
XI. THE INCOMPARABLE LEADER	154
XII. BEFORE THE RUBICON	159

PART III

THE MODERN CAESAR

CHAPTER		<i>page</i>
I.	LA MARCIA SU ROMA	169
II.	THE KING AND THE REBEL	177
III.	START	182
IV.	THE PRIME MINISTER'S MAIDEN SPEECH	185
V.	FROM THE PARLIAMENT TO THE VATICAN	189
VI.	SPEEDING UP	194
VII.	IN SWITZERLAND—AFTER TWENTY YEARS	202
VIII.	CAPITAL AND LABOUR	205
IX.	CORFU	210
X.	BLOOD AND GOLD	212
XI.	THE FIRST ATTEMPT	219
XII.	THE FUNDAMENTS OF THE FASCIST STATE	222
XIII.	LABOUR TRIBUNALS	225
XIV.	"AVE CAESAR"	228
XV.	THE FASCIST SOCIETY	235
XVI.	AND THEY GRUMBLED	241
XVII.	THE RIBBON OF SAINT MAURITIUS	243
XVIII.	THE CORN CONFLICT	249
XIX.	"IL CANTO DEL LAVORO"	252
XX.	THE POPE AND THE DICTATOR	263
XXI.	ROME	272
	INDEX	277

PREFACE

THE author of this book is dead.

His tragedy was not only that of an individual, but perhaps even that of a whole world.

L. Kemechey belonged to a generation which a great writer has said was destroyed by the war, even if it escaped the death-shower of grenades. But during his life L. Kemechey never surrendered to this deep and tragic destruction. He was eighteen when he went into the war; he passed the best years of his youth in the front lines and in grim captivity. When he returned home he found everything in ruins, his country and his property lost, the capital of his Fatherland besieged, his native soil under foreign rule. He himself—the son of one of the oldest and purest families in Hungary—stood alone, without a penny, with no help or assistance of any kind, save that of his own faith and strength. Behind him was the harsh adventure, in which his generation had killed and ravaged without hatred; before him was an age of black desperation and confusion. Thus began the second life, the civil existence, of the man who had been the latest and greatest hope of his country.

In the ranks of his tragically derailed generation there was none more fervent and daring in work than he, none that surpassed him in pluck and heroism, in talent and probity. He was keenly conscious of the overwhelming tasks his age and his Continent had to carry, and he did the work of ten in building up a new Hungary out of the encumbered ruins of the old. In the midst of all these heroic struggles and endeavours for himself and for his country he always kept smiling. For his comrades, he was a model of good cheer and beauty, strong faith and imagination; to some of the older generation, he stood for a hope—a hope that everything would be set right again: though all the time his strength was being undermined, like that of thousands of his age in Europe. But it is only the conflicts

of a great soul which can become tragic, and only the sufferings of a great personality which can grow beyond the individual.

"To strive, to seek, and not to yield"—that was the life of the author of this book; and when for the first time he did yield, it was once and for all. He dared and dared, until he died, but at the end he seemed to judge, or rather to feel, that all the brave fight was in vain, that there was no possible way out of his individual conflicts, and out of the muddle in which his Continent was hopelessly stranded. On the last night of his life he was reading the work of Spengler, *The Decline of the West*. In the fate of L. Kemechey the disastrous destiny of his generation was fulfilled.

His death stirred up deep waters in his country, which was deeply indebted to him for his great services. During the last two years of his life he worked in the Hungarian Foreign Service, at the Royal Embassy in Rome; but for years past the sphere of his activity had partly lain in Italy. He was among the first foreigners, we might even say, among the first Italians, to understand the spirit of Fascism. For long years he was in touch with the most eminent leaders of modern Italy. The Italian Press has unanimously declared that there were but few foreigners who had such a wide outlook and such a thorough knowledge of modern Italy as had L. Kemechey.

This most arresting book deals chiefly with the figure of the creator of Fascism. It is useless to deny that the author of this work had an ardently enthusiastic admiration for the human greatness of Mussolini. But, for all this, the writer has never altered or falsified any seeming inconsistency or contradiction in the career of the great leader.

Mussolini meant, for L. Kemechey, the ideal of the man who lives in order to rule, to act, and to create. What makes this book so well worth reading is, that one must

realize how intensely congenial the hero was to his biographer. One feels that the author sympathized, from the roots of his being and in the finest fibres of his nerves, with the fight which his hero had fought for creating a new faith, a new order, and a new type of man. Whether Mussolini failed or succeeded in his life's work was a vital question for the young Hungarian who wrote this book.

For Mussolini, he answered, in this biography, in the affirmative; for himself, at the end of his life, in the negative. It is this hidden but burning personal interest which gives to the present work on the Duce a fascinating undertone of deep emotionalism.

THE TRANSLATOR

BUDAPEST,

June 21, 1929

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE two chapters preceding the last were worked out by the translator according to the plans and intentions of the author. The chapter of the "Carta del Lavoro" owes much to the brilliant essay of Giuseppe Bottai, the great Italian politician and head of the Corporation's Ministry.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE translation of this book is by a brilliant young Hungarian journalist, whose English may be considered somewhat unusual. Her style is, however, so instinct with the spirit of the author and with his enthusiasm for his subject that the Publishers have refrained from planing it down to academic exactitude lest it should lose thereby its quality.

PART I
THE NEW MAN

CHAPTER I

THE SON OF THE REVOLUTIONIST

It is summer.

The sun is pouring down in a golden flood upon the earth, and from its mighty exultant embrace new life is blossoming in the meadows of Romagna. Wherever one casts one's eyes, on the plains and on the gently sloping hills, shine full ears of corn; while over the boundless golden temple of life rises the arch of the sky, like a marvellous blue cupola.

There is silence, the deep creative silence of summer. Not a breath of wind stirs, not a cloud is wafted by, only life, eternal and triumphant, smiles everywhere. It is the silence of the Italian meadows, into which suddenly breaks the sound of the festal bells, proclaiming the glory of God in a clear-voiced chorus.

We are in Romagna; in one of the most interesting parts of Italy. We are passing over the land where once the great *condottieri* trod, and where even to-day they still remember the proud name of Muzio Sforza. The meadow stretches out before us, where once the saint of Cotignola, the friend of the poor, paced every night, like the shadow of God, with his yellow face and floating white hair. It is a wonderful land, this, from which have sprung saints and *condottieri*—a wonderful land which by its creative force and sunny serenity flings ever a chain round all who were born there, or even once passed through it. No peasant ever wants to emigrate from there, because a thousand sweet memories draw him back to his native soil, which needs so little labour to yield a luxurious harvest. For there the earth is fruitful, the wine is sweet, and love intoxicating.

To-day is Sunday, and the faces of men shine with happiness. This ancient little town of Forli glitters in the blossoming splendour of summer, like a fragrant orange grove. On the town square is a billowing, motley crowd of people.

Near the church is a group of grown-up men, who by ancient custom here discuss the events of the day—old and young together: the old men soldiers of Garibaldi, the young men socialists. Now they get on very well with one

another; only after dinner, when the red Chianti goes round the table of the little inn, does the opposition between fathers and sons break out.

Now ringing laughter sounds from their ranks, clear and jolly. Of course they laugh when the son of the host, who even as a child knew his letters, reads out such strange and humorous things from the newspaper. It is no less a matter than the story of how the chief of the police in St. Petersburg had arrested a young man for being drunk and disorderly in the streets, whilst next day the latter had proved to be a Grand Duke. Now all St. Petersburg was laughing at the honest police officer, and the echo of their laughter had reached even little Forli.

For the newspaper is a matter of importance, whatever the old people may say. Even here in Forli, at the back of beyond, you can learn from it what has been happening the last few days in St. Petersburg; how Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, has arrived very ill at Kissingen; how during the last five days six hundred people have died of cholera in Egypt; how the Pope is tormented with rheumatism; how Gladstone, the English Prime Minister, has been driven into a corner about the Suez Convention; and how in the country of Louis Kossuth a great trial is going on, in which the whole world is interested. But there is something else in the newspaper, on reading which the laughter dies down and the smile fades from their faces.

Yesterday evening the Isle of Ischia was devastated by an earthquake. That magnificent little island, half an hour from Naples, was last night a prey to destruction and horror. Four terrible shocks, then weeping, lamentation, and flight. . . .

Ten thousand dead. . . .

After a minute they are speaking of nothing before the church of Forli but of this dreadful disaster. Perhaps the news is exaggerated? Oh no; the newspaper says, indeed, that the authorities are even keeping something back, and that the number of the dead can only be approximately stated. A light murmur ripples over the square, and thus the sad news flies from mouth to mouth. The boy who brought the newspaper is put upon a bench and made to read the news out again to everybody.

They are all silent, they are all listening intensely,

except one, who is not interested in anything: a strong muscular man of medium height with a sunburnt face, who now quietly and unobserved slips out from the crowd and starts off towards the Dovia Road.

It is the smith from Dovia, Alessandro Mussolini, who only feels that he must hurry home because his wife may any minute bring a new life into the world: the first-born, so longingly expected, who will certainly be a hard and defiant man, enthusiastic, resolute, daring, rebellious, like himself—the father.

If only it is a son!

The smith quickens his steps. He already regrets having come to Forli. Perhaps while he has been away the child has come into the world. From far off, a dry, thin old woman comes trotting towards him. He recognizes her: it is Severina, an ancient institution, like a member of the family, faithful and reliable.

“Severina!”

“Alessandro!”

They rush towards each other; the old woman is bubbling over with joy.

“A son!”

The smith runs home as if pursued. On the bed lies a pale young woman, his wife, Rosa Maltoni. By her side the hereditary prince, who cries and howls pitilessly.

The father falls on his knees before the bed.

“Benito shall be his name,” he says softly, “in honour of Benito Juarez, the great revolutionist, who had enough force and resolution to execute the Emperor Maximilian.”

“I was born on a sunny Sunday, at two o’clock in the afternoon, in the neighbourhood of an ancient crumbling tower, which looked, lofty and solemn, far and wide over the whole country round Forli. Eight days before the sun had entered the sign of the Lion.”

Thus writes Benito Mussolini of his birth. From contemporary newspapers one learns that on the same day, July 29, 1883, at the same hour, between 2 and 3 p.m., a thunderbolt fell on the two-headed eagle standing on the *gloriette*, in the park of Schönbrunn. The lightning struck down the double head of the eagle, flinging it into the pond of the park, in which it sank.

CHAPTER II

THE LAD

SPRING smiled over the meadows. White, fleecy clouds lingered in the sky like the veils of wanton fairies. Everything on the earth was in blossom. In grass and tree, in lark and flower youth took deep breaths of joy.

Three children were gambolling about on the lawn. A tall, fair girl with large, blue eyes, and a chubby, humorous urchin looked up at an old apple-tree with awestruck horror. For on the trunk of the tree was to be seen the third child, the leader of the little band, climbing up among the boughs with an agility which would have put to shame even an honest monkey. Why the deuce did the lad creep up so high? There was no fruit yet, and the blossoms he could reach from the ground. There must be something very important at the top of the tree.

A moment later the boy was on the ground again; he held in his hand two panting, chirping fledglings. His two comrades cried out together: "Benito, do give me one!"

On the face of the boy joy gleamed triumphantly. His knees were bleeding, his breeches torn, but he would not give up the birds for anything. Whoever wants them must catch them. He who wants to attain anything must not remain on the ground. He must go up to the top—there he will find what he seeks.

In these few years the son of the Dovia smith had become a bold little urchin. With his brother, Arnaldo, and the little peasant girl, Marietta, he strolled about the livelong day; and if a learned, large-headed owl had decided to write a history of the birds, then little Benito would certainly have played the rôle of a dreadful tyrant who had no rest so long as he could see a living bird, or a safe and sound nest anywhere near him. The owls especially provoked him—those puffed up, sluggish, nocturnal birds. It was a divine pleasure to poke them out from their dark holes into the brilliant sunlight.

He was an awful little fellow. In school he was ceaselessly rummaging under the benches, his breeches were perpetually ragged from his sliding and climbing adventures, he fought his brother on the slightest provoca-

tion, and already, at the age of six, he demanded a kiss from his little friend, Marietta, and then pulled her hair with infernal joy. Every morning he went with his father's horse to the pump, and even in this short distance he urged the old crock to such a gallop as nearly cost the life of the poor beast. Of course, all this was a delicious joke to the child, but life had also its seamy side.

Once he rushed home howling. In the meadow an older peasant boy had asked him for his little wheelbarrow, which he had filled to overflowing with golden sand. The boor did not give him back his wheelbarrow; on the contrary he even beat little Benito soundly.

"What," said the father to the weeping boy, "you were beaten? Who did it? An older fellow? And you allowed him to beat you? Learn to defend yourself like a man instead of howling like a woman." And to emphasize his words he gave him a smack to finish up with, bearing in mind the wise saying of the Arabian Caliph, Harun al Rashid, that a box on the ear applied at the right time is worth ten years of education.

It was applied at the right moment. The boy went on weeping for a little while, but then he decided to take his revenge upon the traitor. He did not rest till he had found his adversary, whom he pelted with sharp stones until the boor took to his heels with a broken head.

This was Mussolini's first punitive expedition. From this moment—for the episode of the wheelbarrow was the first evil thing that had come into his life—the child became still bolder and more self-confident. There are still living in Forli two men—the brothers Fabri—who are proud to remember that they were among the children of the village to whom Mussolini dealt out his thrashings with the greatest thoroughness.

Once, as autumn was approaching, Mussolini camped out with several of his comrades in the meadows. They soon grew tired of play, and then the question arose: What should they do? One of them said: "At the edge of the meadow, in that garden, there is a huge apple-tree, full of delicious ripe fruit. Let's be off."

The children rushed shouting over the meadow towards the forbidden fruit. Benito was the first to spring over the hedge and up the tree, the others at his heels. In

a moment the sweet fruit was falling down in showers. Excellent booty, but danger was already on their tracks. The watchman had noticed the little robbers, and came after them with threatening shouts. In a moment the boys dispersed, but one of them jumped down so awkwardly that he dislocated his foot. He shouted desperately as he lay on the ground, foreseeing that the old watchman would vent his fury on him. The whole band had fled, but one boy remained—pale, trembling with excitement, his sparkling black eyes open—Benito. Then suddenly he took his unfortunate chum on his back, and with this double burden ran triumphantly away from the clamorous old man.

He was but a child, yet in heart already a man—a general, who would not leave his beaten army in the lurch.

CHAPTER III

EXPELLED FROM PARADISE

IN a cheerful town, in a blooming valley, there stands a gloomy yellow building, which looks as if it were the cemetery of youth.

It is the cloister of the Salesian Friars, and the town is Faenza. Within the garden a tall, pale boy cowers motionless on a stone bench. His hair is dishevelled, his clothes worn out, his shoes patched. His burning black eyes stare into vacancy as if searching there for something far off and unattainable. Nobody dares to disturb him, nobody—for woe to the child who would molest him. He does not play, he does not rush about; he is solitary, fierce and sullen. And his eyes are always turned to the distance. There, far off, where the sky embraces that green hill, there is freedom. . . . There are the meadows, the lawns, the apple-trees. There is his brother Arnaldo, the fair-haired Marietta, and his other comrades, the little field-brigade which have remained without a leader. There is his mother, his dearest and best, always working and suffering.

“My poor mother, what a lot she always had to do! She was ill and nervous, she could not even sleep; I have often seen her in the night rise from her bed and walk up and down the room to quiet her sick nerves. Ten times, twenty times in the night she would get up, although she had to be on her feet early in the morning. She was a teacher, and school began at eight.”

Tears come to the eyes of the morose and lonely boy as he thinks of home. What is happening in his home now? What is the beautiful, yellow siskin doing, and the little owl, which he had taken out of its nest when it was quite young, and which he had succeeded in taming? Every evening the bird would sit near him, and now at nights on the hard cloister bed it seemed as if he could see its luminous phosphorescent yellow eyes. . . . Birds, meadows, freedom, how far you are away. Where have you vanished to?

The autobiography runs:

“First my father was not for my learning in the cloister, but later he agreed. My mother said that I

had still much to learn, and that I also wanted discipline. I was restless, and rather afraid of the institution. I felt beforehand that cloisters and prisons meant really the same thing. I felt that I should lose my freedom, and I arranged races in the meadows to make the best use of my last hours.

"By the middle of October everything was ready—Money, dress, equipment. I do not remember whether it hurt me very much to leave my brother and sister. Edvige was, at that time, three, and Arnaldo seven. But I regretted leaving my yellow siskin, which I kept in a cage under my window.

"On the eve of my departure I had a fight with one of my comrades. My thumb was nearly dislocated, and I had to leave home with a bound-up hand. When I said good-bye to my mother I wept. Then I mounted our donkey, behind my father, and we started at a slow pace. We had not gone two hundred steps when the donkey stumbled and fell. 'A bad sign,' said my father furiously as he pulled the poor donkey to its feet. Silently we continued our road.

"Arrived in Faenza, I was greatly pleased by the iron bridge. It might have been two o'clock when we knocked at the door of the Salesian convent. My father presented me to the censor, who kept on staring at me till at last he said: 'He seems to be a lively little boy.' My father embraced and kissed me. As the huge door of the institution closed behind him I began to weep bitterly."

Thus does Mussolini, in his autobiography, relate his expulsion from Paradise. Those were bitter days, but still sadder and more bitter were the months he passed in the convent.

His school-fellows looked timidly at him, and did not dare to speak to him. The cheerful little lad of the meadows became a fierce and gloomy boy. He was rough, unruly, and violent. Nobody could manage him. The atmosphere of the institution choked him—he felt as if he were in a prison; he was not interested in anything but books, and he did not long for anything—only for freedom.

As for his behaviour! The pious monks clenched their hands in despair. Good Lord, what will become of this lad? Surely a rebel, a revolutionist. He avoided the church if there was but a loophole of escape. He missed the Mass. He said that he could not stand the penetrating odour of the wax candles, that his eyes were hurt by the golden gleam of the holy vessels, and that his devotion was disturbed by the organ.

Shocking. . . . Shocking. . . .

No doubt they would have expelled him long before, if his mother had not wept and implored them on his behalf. The poor woman told them that they had no money at all, and that in no other way could she give her son any education; and she told them, further, how the allowance she had asked for had been refused to her, although she was the most conscientious teacher in the whole district. Under the influence of his mother's tears the boy was allowed to remain there, but his guardians did not cease to look at him askance. Their profession was to bring up orderly, obedient children—not such as Mussolini.

When for the second time they wished to expel him for his rebellious behaviour, this sentence was changed, for his mother's sake, to twelve days' severe punishment. Every day he had to kneel on grains of maize for four hours. He could have been saved this punishment, if he had asked for pardon; but he did not do so. He knelt throughout the twelve days, although by the tenth bleeding wounds had opened on his knees.

"Mussolini, your soul is black as hell," whispered the rector in his ear at the end of the punishment. "Go to-morrow to confess and repent of your sins."

The bed creaked under the child. His rebellious, little soul would ask for no pardon, knew no repentance. He tried to escape into the night, to be saved from confession. Of course they caught him and smacked him mercilessly.

"Who in my whole life has shown me tenderness?" he wrote later. "Nobody. Poor, dreadfully poor was my home, poor and bitter my life. Where could I have learnt tenderness? Perhaps at school, in the cloister, or in the world? Nowhere. Then why do people wonder that I am reserved, solitary, harsh, and stern?"

A man wrote these words, but a bitter, tortured youth breathes in them.

Yet in this grey cloister the child was taught that the one who wants to command must learn to obey. And here he made the acquaintance of *Caesar* and *Virgil*. He devoured these books. Sometimes for hours he could not be driven away from the library, specially when he came upon another wonderful work, which, with its coloured illustrations, excited his whole adoration.

This book was the *Inferno* of Dante. In this cool solitude the Italian genius kissed for the first time the forehead of this hot-blooded, restless child.

CHAPTER IV

SPRING-TIDE

DOVIA . . . Trees and meadows, birds and sweet memories, you are here once more. In the forge the horseshoe glows, and the anvil sparkles beneath the heavy blows of Master Alessandro. His mother stands in the doorway. Suddenly she starts to rush towards him—they embrace each other without a word.

Benito had come home from the Salesian cloister, and before going up for his teacher's examination passed his vacation at Dovia. He was fifteen and, now delivered from his prison, youth soared up in him with triumphant force. He loved the meadows, where he could stroll about for hours, he loved the sounding strokes of the hammer—and he loved books. He would go on reading for days and weeks. He did not want wine, and he had already dropped cigarettes.

Some restless desire, some unheard-of activity, burned in this fifteen-year-old boy. Once his mother overheard him, when at night he locked himself up in his room to deliver speeches. The good woman was terrified.

"Are you mad, my son? Only lunatics talk to themselves. What is the matter with you?"

"Never mind, mother dear," was the simple answer. "I am only practising elocution. Believe me the time will come when all Italy will tremble before me."

But meanwhile he went up to Forlimpopoli, to the teacher's seminary. The director of the seminary was Carducci, the brother of the great poet. Here Benito had to continue his studies. He was an industrious and quick-minded child, who understood in a moment the essence of everything. But he did not care about the interpretations of his professors. He had already his own independent opinions. "He is too lively," said his professors. "He is too obstinate and conceited," said his comrades, although they liked him.

At the age of eighteen Mussolini had finished his *studium*, and wished to take an appointment at Predappio. He competed for the post of a municipal clerk, which, though not a brilliant office, yet ensured a meagre living.

But at the election the authorities found that, with regard to age, he was too young, and that for his age he was already too much of a revolutionist.

When he was told that his application had been refused, he spoke thus to the Mayor: "Gentlemen, the day will come when you will be ashamed of this."

Bold and visionary words. At so young an age only Napoleon had said such things, within the walls of the Cadet School at Brienne.

The next stage was at Gualtieri, a small town near Reggio Emilia. Here young Mussolini was appointed for the first time as assistant teacher.

"I arrived on a foggy, mournful afternoon," he writes in his autobiography. "Some people met me at the station. I went to a pension, where I paid forty lire a month. My salary was fifty-six, and thus not much remained over for amusements. Every morning I went punctually to school, where about forty boys were under my care. School finished at one o'clock, and my afternoons and evenings were thus always free. Of course, my first days there were rather monotonous, but later I found some society—every Sunday they danced, and I danced with them. Thus the months flew by."

The half-year which Mussolini passed in this small town ploughed deep furrows in his life. It was as if his stormy and passionate temperament and his inventive mind—his thirst for new ideas—had found the system to which it could adapt itself. He was a revolutionist down to the roots of his being, an adversary of everything old, poor proletarian beggar as he was. At home in Romagna he had never seen anything but a passionate and exasperated people which could not earn their living; he had never heard anything but flashing outbreaks of hatred against the possessors of money and power. His mother? This saintly, delicate, kind-hearted woman had had nothing but suffering and work: in the morning at school, in the afternoon and evening at home. Silently and with torn nerves she added penny to penny by perpetual, aimless labour. His father? Oh, how many times he had looked at this brown, robust man as the hammer sparkled in his

hand and the iron glowed beneath his vigorous blows! And how many times he had heard the embittered out-breaks of this man, how many times he had seen him staring at the reddish flames with gloomy eyes! Money lounged in silk in the streets, and they had often nothing for supper but the fruits his sister had picked in the meadows.

The father was a revolutionary socialist; what else could the son have become?

Caesar, too, could never forget Marius, nor could Napoleon efface from his soul the remembrance of Paoli. Mussolini was also a revolutionist, but his feverish, flaming eyes, like two burning reflectors, searched for the way he had to take.

At Gualtieri he became acquainted with socialism, and with the frenzied enthusiasm of youth he flung himself into the stream of the new doctrines.

The working man is exploited—it is too true, for does not his father work in vain? Does he not earn every penny by bitter toil, whilst others feast with their inherited fortunes? Is not property theft? Is not the world governed by money? Has not every worker to endure the fate of a slave? Must not the proletariat of the world unite? Oh, yes. It is true.—Marx, Lassalle, Babœuf, you flaming geniuses, you benefactors of mankind, I give you thanks for having taught me all this.

Thus thought and spoke the young revolutionist. The new ideas blazed up in his soul like great red torches, and he rose from his table feeling dizzy, so long and intensely had he read.

He went out into the open to get some fresh air. On the square the monument of Garibaldi was covered with flowers, and a roaring crowd stood around it.

—Hear, hear!

—Where is the speaker?

—Patience. The speaker has missed his train.

A sharp whistle. Fists were raised, the noisy exasperation increased. Suddenly a pale, young man stood up before the crowd.

—What is the matter? You have no speaker? What have you to speak about?

—About Garibaldi.

The young man was already standing on the pedestal of the statue, and for one hour and a half, Benito Mussolini, the adherent of Marx, Lassalle, and Babœuf, spoke to the people of Italian unity, of the greatness and glory of the nation, and of Garibaldi, the secret ideal of his soul, who had fulfilled the national hopes.

The crowd applauded him for several minutes. This was the first rhetorical success of the young revolutionist, who had not perhaps noticed that beyond Marx, beyond the communistic declaration, beyond his ideals of world revolution, beyond his turbulent thoughts, a wonderful dream reposed in his heart, there awaiting its resurrection—the dream of an abandoned glory; the thousand of Marsala.

CHAPTER V

OVER NEW SEAS

IN Gualtieri the months flew by. The vacations came ever nearer. What should he do, what should he begin? Should he go home and bury himself for these two months in Dovia, when his soul was full of new ideas, of new thoughts? Should he cleave to earth when he wanted to fly?

No.

There, far away in the north, where the gigantic barricades of the Alps were ranged, there was the country of liberty. There was the republic which he must know, there were living the new men and the new thoughts which were calling him incessantly.

Oh, if he could only go to Switzerland.

With him action always followed desire. Thus was born the first lie of his life.

"My sweetest darling mother," he writes home, "I have a debt of honour, and if you do not send me by telegram fifty lire, I will immediately kill myself. God bless you, my adored mother; you will never see me alive."

In one day the money was there. The expenses of the journey were in his pocket, he could decamp.

"On the 9th of July I arrived in Chiasso. Having bought a newspaper, I read with horror, that my father had been imprisoned. In Predappio and Orte the socialists wanted to prevent the victory of the clericalists and broke the ballot-boxes to pieces. My father, being a socialist, was thrown into prison. Should I return, or should I go on? I went on, and next day I came to Iverdun, the first Swiss station, with two lire and ten centesimi in my pocket."

Do you know how much two lire and ten centesimi were? At most, 1s. 6d. With this travelling equipment the nineteen-year-old Mussolini set out towards new seas. With 1s. 6d. What need for more? His arm was strong, his heart brave. He did not shrink from any kind of work; he would work. He would be a porter, mason, washer-up.

It did not matter. The main point was that he should pass his free time among new men. That he should bathe himself in the stream of thought, and at night remain alone with his books.

He was only a young fellow yet, but his soul was carved in granite. It was full to overflowing of the greatest and most serious feeling in man:

The will to success.

From this was to spring forth later that which was the real essence of his nature:

The will to power.

But we are still far from that. Some weeks will pass by before there falls into his hands the famous work of Nietzsche, which will be of decisive influence in the formation of his character. Nietzsche, Sorel, Machiavelli will remain still for a time on the dusty shelves. The lad had now other problems to solve.

He had not enough money for a lodging. Where should he sleep that night?

Before him lay a bridge, ancient and abandoned. Between its two arches, on a pillar rising out of the water, stood the statue of an angel. He crept down to the statue and crouched at its feet. He leaned his back against the wall, and drawing his knees up to his chin and pressing his face close to the cold body of the angel, he fell asleep, tired and happy.

He slept, and did not know that over him watched the one with whom next day he would have to struggle. His adversary, the eternal adversary of us all, the source of beauty and sorrow, light and shadow, splendour and misery—our lord—Money.

CHAPTER VI

A LETTER

My friend, what I write of is a record. The record of a hopeless youth, which has already lost everything, even its ideals.

Don't tell anybody what I write; only one woman knows of my grief, and, if you read my letter, you will be the second. Curses on you if you blab. My demand to keep secret what I write should not seem incomprehensible to you. So to begin:

On the 9th of July I started from Gualtieri, where I said good-bye to my friend only. It was Wednesday, and from Parma to Milan, from Milan to Chiasso I nearly died of the insupportable heat. Chiasso, the first republican town, had me as its guest till nine o'clock in the evening.

Here I read that my father, accused of disturbance at the elections, had been arrested. The news troubled me, for had I known this in Gualtieri, I should not have travelled to Switzerland, but have gone home. I met a fellow traveller, changed my Italian money, and got into the train which was to arrive next morning at Lucerne, after a journey of thirteen hours. The compartment was full of Italians. Would you believe it? I stood at the window almost the whole way. It was a fairy night. The moon rose behind the snow-white mountains and bathed itself in the silver smile of the stars. The lake of Lugano was like a polished metal plate, on which glimmered unknown mysterious flames. The summit of the Gotthard appeared to me like a sulky, meditative giant, looking down on the valley, where along a blind path the steel serpent rushed with me towards a new world. In the carriage everybody slept. I alone was thinking. Of what was I thinking that night, which divided my life in two? I do not remember; only in the morning, when we arrived in German Switzerland, where a chilly November rain received us—then (perhaps through physical weariness) I felt my heart longing for the sunny, green landscapes of Italy. Was it the

first symptom of home-sickness? Perhaps. In Lucerne I changed and took a ticket for Yverdon, because my companion had given me hopes that he could procure me work there with a relative of his who was a merchant. On Thursday, at eleven in the evening, I arrived at Yverdon, after having travelled for thirty-six hours. Exhausted, I entered a miserable tavern. There for the first time I spoke French. I had something to eat; then we went to the Italian merchant. He prattled. Later he invited us to supper. More useless prattle. At last he gave me one franc; that he should not think he was presenting me with it, I left him as a pledge my splendid Arab knife, which I had bought when in Parma at the beginning of April. . . .

On Friday I stared at the statue of Pestalozzi for an hour; the rest of the day I slept. On Saturday I went with an out-of-work painter to Orbe, situated in the neighbourhood, in order to find there some work as a stone-carrier. I succeeded in finding work, and on Monday morning I started on it. The work: 11 hours daily; the wages: 32 centesimi per hour. A hundred and twenty-one times that day I went up to the second floor, a hod of stones on my shoulders. By the evening every muscle in my arm was swollen. I had for supper potatoes roasted in hot ashes, and I threw myself dressed on my bed—a heap of straw. The next morning at five I was already at work, trembling with the dreadful rage of impotence. My employer actually drove me mad; on the third day he apostrophized me thus:

—"You are dressed too elegantly."

This expression was really very significant. I wanted to revolt, to break in the skull of this dirty scoundrel who accused me of laziness, when my bones were already bent under the weight of the stones. I wanted to cry in his face: you rascal, you scoundrel!!

And then? He who pays is always in the right. Saturday evening came. I said to my employer that I wanted to leave Orbe, and therefore asked for my wages. He went into his bureau, and I awaited him on the staircase. After some minutes he appeared,

and with ill-concealed fury gave me twenty lire and a few centesimi, saying:

—"Here is your money, but even that you have stolen from me."

I was petrified. What should I do to him? Should I kill him? What did I do to him? Nothing. Why? I was hungry and I had no shoes. A pair of new shoes had been torn to rags on my feet by the stones, which had also taken the skin off my hands. I hurried, almost barefooted, to an Italian, and bought from him nailed Alpine shoes. Next morning, on the 20th of July, I went to Chavorney and got into the Lausanne train. Lausanne is not really a beautiful town, but very attractive. It is full of Italians: there are about six thousand. The executive committee of the Labour Party is there, and there too appears the review *Avvenire del Lavoratore*, which I am editing in collaboration with the lawyer Barboni.

But let us take things in order.

For the first week in Lausanne I managed to live on the money I had earned in Orbe; but after a week I had not a farthing left. The nickel medal of Marx was the only piece of metal in my pocket. In the morning I had still a little piece of bread, but by the evening I did not know where to sleep. I strolled about hopelessly for a time, but my growling stomach was tormented by such cramps that I could go no farther. In the park of Monthbenon I sat down under the statue of William Tell; I certainly must have presented a terrible appearance, for the passers-by scanned me with timid and suspicious glances. Oh, if De Dominicis had come just then, with his moral preachings, with what pleasure I would have wrung his neck.

About five o'clock I left the park, and started towards Ouchy. Whilst I passed along the quay evening came on. The last rays of the sun in the twilight, and the last chimes of the old bells, turned my attention in a new direction. An infinite melancholy seized me there on the shores of Lake Lemán, and I wondered whether it was still worth while to go on living, even for a day. . . . I was meditating thereon when

a sweet music, as beautiful as a lullaby, chased away my thoughts. I returned from the shores of the lake; forty musicians were playing before the great hotel Beau Rivage. I leaned against the iron gate of the garden, and through the green foliage of the pines, I admired and listened. The music had refreshed me indeed. Yet dreadful pains tormented me, as if one had dipped burning needles in my intestines. Meanwhile a great crowd swayed up and down in the park. I could listen to the rustlings of silk and to the conversation in unknown languages. An elderly couple passed in front of me; they seemed to be English. I wanted to beg money from them, that I might sleep somewhere; but the words died away on my lips. The woman was ugly and lean, but gold and pearls were sparkling on her. I had not a farthing, had not a bed, had not a piece of bread; swearing, I ran away from their proximity. Oh, holy idea: anarchy, anarchy of thoughts and deeds! The man who is writhing on the ground has perhaps no right to bite the one who has trodden him down?

From ten to eleven in an old boat. I felt the air of Savoya. I returned to the town, and passed the remaining part of the night under a great bridge. In the morning I felt curious to look at myself in a shop-window. I was unrecognizable. Then I met a fellow-countryman and told him my case in a few words. He laughed; I cursed him. At last he took from his pocket ten soldi and gave them to me. Thanking him, I ran to the nearest baker and bought a loaf. I hurried towards the forest, feeling that I was pressing a treasure under my arm. Having left the town I threw myself on the bread with the ferocity of a dog; for twenty-six hours I had not eaten a morsel.

I felt that life began to circulate afresh in my veins. With the cessation of hunger my courage returned; I decided to fight.

I called on an Italian professor named Zini. Before entering his delightful villa I cleaned my shoes, arranged my necktie, and adjusted my hair. The professor was a funny man, his grey hair dishevelled,

his nose something of a phenomenon. I greeted him in Italian; he received me thus:

—"Again this daily bother . . . Cristo Santo! Cristo Santo! What do you want? I cannot . . . I am not in the position. Well, we will see . . . I don't think . . . But perhaps it is possible."

—"Go to hell, with the one who brought you into the world, you rogue."—Thus I answered and left him.

In my next letter I'll tell you the rest.

To you it may seem that all this is only a novel, but everything really happened, and is even to-day an actuality.

I got your post card. Send me your poems and write about our chums.

Your friend,
BENITO MUSSOLINI

This letter is, indeed, a fiery outbreak of the ardent and effervescent, but at the same time deep and passionate, Italian soul. There, in the swift lightnings of joy and the pale eruptions of fury, glows the Italian temperament which had raised Dante to the stars and made Machiavelli immortal. It is a categorical imperative of every great man to live, to think, and to grow after the nature of the soil from which he has sprung. Say but one word and I will tell you who you are. In the accent of one syllable, in the intonation of one vowel, the whole character of a nation can be reflected.

Do you notice this? He has not a single penny left in his pocket, he is strolling about ragged and hungry, he will kill his employer in his impotent rage, he will fling himself into the dark waters of the lake to throw away his life. Misery is strangling him by the throat, and yet he stops before the hotel Beau Rivage, because he has caught the sound of music. That is the Italian nature as it really is. That is the Italian revolutionist who throws bombs into the royal carriage, but admires the antique statues of the gods. That is the Italian nation which, with its ardent and intensive soul, assails heights and depths like a boiling volcano, but stops delighted before the eternal enchantment of song and melody. Which is the stronger on this marvellous soil, the sound of the cannon or

the voice of the guitar? And who is greater here? Verdi or Caesar, Colleoni or Michelangelo? Perhaps both are equally great, and maybe the genius of the race is to be seen in this wonderful harmony.

"I wanted to beg money from them, that I might sleep somewhere; but the words died away on my lips." From behind the black array of letters the silhouette of the New Man already begins to emerge. Everything that he had done till then, everything that he had written in his letter, is what every other Italian would have done and written in his place. Only not this one thing. Before the Fascismus, Italy was full of beggars. One could not take a step in peace without being asked for a soldi. To-day there is not a beggar or a *lazzarone* in the whole of Italy. The new Italy does not ask and does not accept tips. But does she remember that her national self-respect was created by a man buffeted by hunger and misery, when on the shore of Lake Lemano he shrank from the thought of begging or accepting alms?

Does Italy think of this? I do not know. Did he think of it, this nineteen-year-old lad? I do not believe so. The day was far away, on which, from the New Man, should be forged a New Caesar.

To-day he is still hungry and has no bread. To-day an angry red torch is still flaring in his hand, to-day his feet are still bleeding from the stones. Others drink of life from foaming goblets, but he must fight for a drop of water. Oh, holy idea, anarchy; oh, anarchy of deeds. . . .

CHAPTER VII

THE NIGHT ASYLUM

A DARK, smoky room. Some doubtful old pictures hang on the wall and the samovar is softly buzzing.

Several men and women sit round the table; they are all blonde like the Volga, and dreamy like the vast expanses on which they were born. They are involved in long and endless disputes. They discuss the sufferings of holy Russia, the diseases of despotism. They invoke the gloomy barbarian Power which had chained a mighty nation, and which had expelled them with its knout from their homes. They invoke that history in which there are but recurring ghostly shadows: Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Catherine.

And the eternal pariah—the fair, dreamy, miserable moujik.

All the pain, all the sadness of the infinite Sarmatian steppes trembles here in this smoky, shabby room. Since midday they have been talking. Now it is midnight, and they grope about in the most secret depths of the Soul. They seek the reason, the ultimate reason, the truth, which they will never find, for in this endless, ceaseless search it always slips from their hands.

They thirst for light and one could almost bite the smoke in the room.

They are Russians.

Revolutionists all, driven there by the police of St. Petersburg, or by their desire to live on a free soil. They are the most assiduous attendants at the high-schools of Geneva, and in the evenings they meet in this mournful night asylum.

In the corner, on a worn-out sofa, sits a young woman of striking beauty; her hair is gold-blond, her eyes violet-blue. Her lips, as she opens them to speak, are like a blooming flame-red flower. Where did she come from? Who knows? She is a girl student and nothing more. A revolutionist, but her dewy youth is smiling in this gloomy, sorrowful society, like the first violet among weather-beaten, snow-covered trunks.

She diverts herself with a pale youth. . . . How different

is this young man from these bulky, fair, dreaming Russians. His words, his gestures are so decided. . . . His mind is sharp as a razor. Every inch of him boils with the fiery temperament of the South.

"Helena," says the boy in a choking voice, "you must never be a coward and run away from life. If we face our fate we shall triumph. I for my part could not imagine a situation where I should succumb. . . . I was a mason, I was a workman, and, when the winter came, an errand boy. I did not like this job, of course, but what could I do? The Swiss winter is long and cruel, and a mason can't work at that season of the year. In the Rue de Prée I found a small Italian tavern; there I was employed. For dinner and supper I received a cup of soup and a piece of bread, a shelter for the night and some miserable payment. In the morning I ran along the Rue de Prée, bareheaded and barefooted, carrying a basketful of bottles. I had nothing on but a pair of worn-out trousers and an old jersey. At every house I handed over what I had to deliver; if I received a tip I thanked for it beautifully: *Merci, Madame*. I wonder whether the good Swiss thought of who was knocking at their doors. . . . But don't you feel bored by all this?"

The girl shakes her pretty head. "Go on," she says softly. "You always talk so strangely, Benituska."

"Well, then, I'll go on. When I had a little free time I slipped into the University library. How many new thoughts and ideas swept over me. Nietzsche, Sorel . . . The will to power. Do you know how many times I have read this book? I think I could recite by heart every sentence of it. I have read many a book in French, in Italian, in German, but not one made such an impression on me as that of Nietzsche. Not even Marx, not even Lassalle. No one. Shall I go on?"

The girl nods, smiling.

"Do you know whom I like best among my professors? Wilfredo Pareto. And do you know why? Because he does not make a theory of everything, and because he does not want to press everything into a system. He always darts down upon the essence of things—without regard to hypotheses, to principles, or to traditions. He says that every system is a gaol and every theory a mistake. He is

a very interesting fellow, this professor. I shall never forget his first lecture; for immediately after it the police arrested me.

? ?

"Well, of course, not for having been present at the lecture, but for being without a job. In my pocket there were but a few centimes. I used to meet with revolutionists, so I was, to use the official slang, a tramp and a runaway from work. They imprisoned me."

"You have already been imprisoned?" asks the little revolutionist with a delightful thrill, for this seems to her tremendously imposing.

"Yes," replies the boy, "but I don't remember it any more. I am not interested in the past. For me only one thing matters: the future."

The society breaks up. It is already 1 p.m. Helena says good-bye with her charming smile:

"To-day you have again talked about such interesting things, Benituska. But all the same we shall go to hear Vandervelde to-morrow. He will speak of Christ and Communism. They say that he is a clever man; will you come with me?"

The boy bows delighted, and next day they might have been seen at the discourse. At the appearance of the Belgian socialist leader the hall was crowded with socialists, communist anarchists, students with a feverish expression, and workmen with hard-skinned hands. And Vandervelde spoke of Christ, of the socialist ideas of the Redeemer, of the holy communism of the apostles. When he finished his discourse he was greeted with roars of applause. But this noisy acclamation was suddenly interrupted by a startling cry:

—"He is not right!"

It was a dark, lean boy, in the background behind the crowd, who shouted it out. They wanted to silence him. But he would not leave off:

—"I want to speak!"

The crowd grumbled, but they let him go on. . . . The next moment young Mussolini was standing on a chair. The adherent of Nietzsche and Carducci turned towards Vandervelde. His words were ardent, fiery, and violent:

"Jesus and his followers are guilty of having under-

mined the building of the mighty Roman Empire . . . They killed out the force and courage which had made Rome great and the Romans immortal. Instead of force, courage, and manliness they set on the throne of the Caesars humility, poverty, and forbearance. The morality of slaves. And Rome, once so powerful, became infected with this slave's doctrine and it could no longer resist the flood of Barbarians sweeping down from the North. . . . I declare Jesus to be guilty of this. . . ."

He was applauded. Vandervelde, too, had to recognize that in this dark, dishevelled boy loomed great and unusual talent.

When they had got out of the hall the girl took his arm: "You spoke jolly well, Benituska," she said quietly, turning her dreamy blue eyes to the boy.

"Helene!"

The girl pulled jokingly at his arm. "Let's go. Let us hurry to our little, miserable shelter. Hot tea and our friends await us. I am longing to tell them how well you have spoken. . . ."

The boy wrinkled his brow sulkily. What the deuce should he do with these Russians? What did the usual, ceaseless unending dispute about the sufferings of holy Russia matter to him to-day? The bitter tea and the bitter words? The eternal search for reason, for truth, which brought forth but the one confused question, the old Russian problem:

—What shall we do? *Sto gylati?* . . .

Luckily that damned night asylum was still so far off. Along zigzag streets, across obscure squares, it would take a good half-hour to reach it. But they were not in a hurry. For was not the sky full of stars, the night brilliant, and the perfume of this girl so fragrant?

They came to the small bridge. A cold wind whistled along the river. The girl shivered all over and leaned on the boy. He felt under her thin coat the fresh rhythm of the girlish body. The wind sang a strange, fierce march and a blonde ringlet fluttered before his face.

—"Helene!"

The girl flew with a light scream from his confession; her tall, nervous figure rushed down the moonlit alley like a merry little sprite.

—“Helene!”

The boy seized her by both hands, his two large black eyes were shining in the night:

—“I love you . . .”

A warm, blue, glowing glance was the only answer, and two soft serpents were clasped passionately round his neck.

CHAPTER VIII

INTERMEZZO

—ANNEMASE. Train stops here one minute. . . .

From the last third-class carriage of the train Mussolini alighted. He had been turned out of Geneva for having organized a strike; and now he had come to France in order to find some position there.

Annemase is a little country town, pretty and cheerful. Other scents, another air, another people.

What should he do? At first he worked as a mason. Later—a bit of good luck—he got a job as a family tutor. He already went into society, where he was received with pleasure because of his sarcasm and original manner. He was a frequent guest of the vice-prefect; they liked him, for he was an excellent card-player.

His next station is Marseilles. Here he gets again entangled with the strikers. He is expelled. He goes back to Switzerland. His goal is Zürich.

His fate is again a Russian woman—small and deformed, with no teeth, and with eyeglasses.

Honi soit qui mal y pense. It is certainly not any question of love. This woman is the famous Angelika Balabanoff.

The mind of the Russian woman is as sharp as a razor. She speaks five or six languages. Her knowledge is something marvellous. She is the soul and moving force of the Russian revolutionists who have escaped to Switzerland. They are all enthusiastic about her. But she appreciates only two of them. One is an impoverished Russian nobleman of middle height. With his Calmuc face, his pointed moustache and eyebrows, his tiny goatee beard and heavy, clumsy walk, he looks exactly as if he had just appeared in the door of a hut on the river Volga. It is Lenin. The other, with eyeglasses and a crumpled face, always of a dirty and disorderly exterior, is—Trotsky.

These two she favours, these two she regards as true revolutionists. And the third? The twenty-year-old Italian youth, whose will has been forged out of steel.

What have they become?

The woman, the Russian nobleman, and the man with eyeglasses and the dirty exterior, seated together in a

sealed carriage, were—according to the wise orders of the German staff—transported to Russia.

What have they become?

Everybody knows.

And what has become of the pale Italian boy who with them endured the miseries of the long Swiss winter?

At that time he was still sitting with the Russian woman in a smoky room, translating Lassalle and Liebknecht into Italian. They worked together assiduously. But after some months the lad was again thrown into prison, and then, as a tramp and revolutionist, expelled for ever from the Swiss territories. He returned to Italy, and saw the Russians no more. But they did not forget him.

And once, when an Italian deputation of exiled socialists visited Lenin in the Red Hall of the Kremlin, to complain to him of the persecution of the communists, the Tsar of the Reds answered thus:

“I know Mussolini. He is a strong and a hard man. It was a great pity to have let him go out of the Labour Party.”

And Trotsky added with a resigned gesture:

“It was, indeed, a great pity. He was the only man who could have brought about the revolution of the proletariat in Italy.”

CHAPTER IX

IN MOURNING

THE "dangerous revolutionist," the poor tramp, entered the 11th Bersaglieri regiment of His Majesty the King of Italy. When he came to Verona in 1904 everybody looked at him askance, but a week later everybody liked him; for he was first among the foremost.

To the Bersaglieri, the most popular of the soldiers of Italy, a special training was always granted. The Bersaglieri are the *élite* of the Italian infantry. Even their march differs from that of other troops. A Bersaglieri battalion offers, indeed, a picturesque spectacle. Gymnastics, running, jumping, putting the weight have the same importance in the training of the Bersaglieri as riding in that of the Hussars. And Mussolini was the best in gymnastics, the first in running, and not to be beaten in the high-jump.

His lieutenant, Anselmi, grew fond of him. And after a few weeks he reported to the Colonel that Mussolini, the dangerous revolutionist, was an excellent soldier. He was decent and disciplined. There could be no complaint of him.

On a cold February day the young recruit received a telegram from Dovia. His father had wired that his mother was dangerously ill. He asked for furlough and rushed home by the next train.

By the time he arrived his mother had died. The frightful blow struck down the boy like a thunderbolt. On that cold, starry night he buried, not only his mother, but his sister, his friend, his dearest on earth. His hot tears bedewed the only warm corner of his life, the last blaze of the old hearth.

He wept.

On the third day the postman knocked at the door. He brought a letter from Captain Simonetti, who expressed his sincere sympathy for his sorrowing soldier.

The letter smuggled some warmth into the little recruit's heart. He answered it at once:

MY HONOURED CAPTAIN,

In the name of my father, my brother, and my sister I thank you with all my heart for your con-

dolences, and for those of my comrades. I have thrown into the fire many of the letters which I received during these sorrowful days, for I could find in them but the usual banal phrases of condolence; but your letter, my Captain, will be preserved among the dearest mementos of my life. Now—as you say—I have no other duty than to follow the advice of my mother, to worship her memory, and to carry on my task as a soldier and a citizen. Weeping and lamentation are for women. A man does not weep, a man suffers and dies without a word. A man has to work and to keep on the right road; he has to honour the holy traditions of family and Fatherland, not by useless, unproductive talk, but by serious work. It is a beautiful thing to remember the heroes who welded together the Fatherland by their own blood, but it is a still more beautiful thing to prepare ourselves to make a living shield of our breasts against the Northern Barbarians if they try to degrade Italy into a “geographical notion.”¹ This at least is what I think.

Accept, my Captain, my humblest homage,

BENITO MUSSOLINI

PREDAPPIO, *February* 26, 1905.

Captain Simonetti read the letter twice over. He had certainly not expected such resolution and such intelligence from a recruit.

—H’m—“We have to build a living dam against the onrush of the Northern Barbarians.” What did this mean? And the concise style of the letter? Those self-conscious words at the end: “This at least is what I think.”

—Your opinion. You. Who are you? How dare you speak in this way? Are you a madman or a genius? A statesman or a general?

—Nobody and nothing. To-day you are but a grey private soldier in the great army of His Majesty the King.

¹ The famous saying of Prince Metternich: “Italy is but a geographical notion.”

CHAPTER X

MACHIAVELLI AND THE POET

STRANGE people meet at night in the little *osteria* of Dovia. A guest is nowhere to be seen, the doors have long been shut, but inside, in the inner rooms, this society sits up till late into the night. They are not here for the delights of wines and intoxication, no—they have come for something quite different.

One of them reads aloud and the others listen. The society consists of the notability of the village, the reader is Mussolini. He has completed his military service and is now staying at home for a little while. His father had been completely broken by the death of his mother, but since he, the eldest son, had arrived the old man has been in far better spirits.

The old smith sits on the smoky stove, and he looks down with pride at the boy, who has already seen something of the world, who has even been a soldier, and whose sonorous voice is heard with such pleasure by the others.

What is the young fellow reading?

Silence. It is Carducci who speaks now. Do you hear his bitter curse upon a cowardly generation, do you understand his brilliant words, do you feel his fiery force?

Silence. It is another book now.

"The State cannot be maintained by words."

Who has said this? Who has descended into the little village, into this smoky tavern, to lecture on the art of politics? To introduce these simple countrymen to the world of realities? Who is the man whose striking face and steely eyes flash from the pages of the book? Who is it that speaks of the holiness of the aim and of the unimportance of the means? Who proclaims that every revolution has to fortify its power by a frightful blow upon the enemies of the new order? Who is it that speaks of Sinigaglia and glorifies Cesare Borgia? Who is this man?

It is Messer Nicolò Machiavelli, the ingenious precursor of the Unita Italia, the grand master of every politician.

They listen to him from evening till late into the night. The commentator, the lecturer is always this same boy. Ardent discussions break out at certain chapters, and the

young fellow has to defend the principles of the great politician by long explanations.

But to-day there is no discussion. The words lag, the boy does not read with such ardour, nor reply with such sudden energy, as he did but a few days before.

What is the matter with him?

He goes home and, sitting down in his little room, he stares out into the night.

There, yonder, lives Melisande, the dearest, sweetest girl in the world. Her figure is tall, she sways as she walks, her eyes are full of expression.

The boy takes out a white sheet of paper, and suddenly a strange line slips from beneath his pencil:

Non guardarmi, carina . . .

Don't look at me, my darling . . .

What has happened to this youth? A frightful thing, an unheard-of accident, which occurs with alarming certainty in the life of every man.

The pupil of Marx, Engels, Machiavelli, and Nietzsche—the Superman has met his Nemesis.

He is writing a poem—and, what is worse, a love-poem.

CHAPTER XI

"CLASS - WAR"

ON the chief square of Forli a man is standing behind the huge columns of the arcade. He holds newspapers in his hand and books under his arm. Perhaps nobody knows that this strange fellow has already written great articles on Machiavelli and Nietzsche, that his ideal is the Superman, that he approves of the concise and brutal spirit of Sorel's syndicalism. Still less do they know that this indomitable temperament has had patience enough to read through and analyse in a splendid essay, the mile-long poem of Klopstock. He adores Beethoven and music in general. He speaks French and German perfectly, English and Russian quite well, but God defend pious souls from what he says in Italian at public meetings. People stare at him slightly shocked. "He is rather crazy," says one. "He always approves of the author whose work he has read last," says another. "An extravagant youth," people whisper behind his back. "A dangerous revolutionist," the police wrote on his dossier.

After some stormy years, which he passed partly in Friaule and Udine as a teacher, and partly in Triente as a journalist, Benito Mussolini came back to Forli, his native place. There he got a position as a Secretary of the local organization of the Labour Party. He was also the Editor of a review entitled *Class-War*. He got married, and had to keep his family on a salary of 120 lire a month.

"I refuse any raising of my salary, because I do not work for money but merely from conviction."

The Editor-in-Chief of *Class-War* lived on 120 lire with his wife and his first baby; for at that time there was no question of money, but of something quite different. It was now for the first time that the journalist could speak in his own paper to the public. The secretary of the Party had now at last got hold of a public to organize. The Condottiere was now recruiting his first troops.

The scene was a little country town whose inhabitants appreciated the taverns far higher than the libraries, who preferred dreams to real life and compromise to courage.

His medium for organization was a small penny paper, which appeared every fortnight.

What did this man want in this poor abandoned place? What far-off aims was he striving for, while struggling with local indifference? And what did he want here in his birthplace, where everybody had known him since his childhood and where he could not become a prophet? What did he want to attain with that miserable little paper, which he had not only to write, but of which he had to set up every line, and which he had even to pack up ready for delivery.

It did not matter. What had the Greek philosopher said? Give me a fulcrum and I will move the universe.

After a slavery of seventeen centuries the liberation of Italy had been achieved with extreme rapidity. But the nation was not yet united. The Genovese sailor did not understand the shepherd of Calabria, the nobleman of Piedmont had no idea of the dialect which the gentry of Naples were speaking. The middle-classes were exhausted by their tremendous fight for the freedom of the country. There was no programme, no leader, no system, and no steadfast will which might have brought order into the new Italy. Everything went on just as it could, everything was right as it was. The child had learned to walk. There was but one actively working force in the whole country—the social-democracy. And it was that force which stood nearest to the militant temperament of young Mussolini.

“We would tell our adversaries that our criticism is always based on sincerity and on respect for every decent idea. We want to keep ourselves far from all personal insults and hatred. But we neither have, nor will have, any pardon for the charlatans, who only go in for Labour in order to obtain popularity, votes, money, and clients.”

“Socialism is not a commercial undertaking, it is not a toy for politicians, a dream for idealists, or a sport for the mob; socialism is a living force of moral and material development. It is perhaps the greatest drama which has moved humanity to build a bridge between the bestial man and the real man—a bridge which shall lead humanity from the struggle of life to a quiet existence.”

What exuberant thoughts, what fiery and cruel words. The typical *Sturm und Drang*. What did this youth aim at?

"Everybody has a right to well-being. It is malicious irony to put a book into the hand of one whose stomach is empty. It is a sheer impossibility to speak of principles and ideals to a hungry person. Art and politics, science and literature are but empty words in the eyes of starving people. First the bread and then the alphabet. Only people who eat their fill are able to think."

The Secretary of the Party had already made good progress as an agitator. But from these general phrases the personality of Benito Mussolini was beginning to emerge.

"Our life is an open sheet on which anybody may read these words: Knowledge, struggle, misery. We are strong, for we are pure; we are strong, for we have no friends. We demand neither popularity, nor votes, nor clients. Frankly and recklessly we tell the truth to everyone, even to those who follow us. The newspaper is for us a battlefield on which we fight with a mighty weapon—the pen which, like the sword, is of steel."

"We have nothing to lose, we are free."

"Socialism has to remain a terrifying and a majestic thing. If we follow this line, we shall be able to face our enemies."

Thus did the revolutionist confront his adversaries. He never liked to butter people, to beat about the bush, or carefully to pick his sentences. Every word, every expression, was like a piece of lava, burning, rude, and strong. He took a bolder tone in his little country paper than even the central organ of the Party—the *Avanti*—ever dared to use. And he wielded his pen with such a perfect skill as the best journalist might have envied.

"In our days journalism is not a profession but a mission. We are not journalists for the sake of a high salary. We do not produce the paper in order to delight ourselves with a beautifully bound volume at

the end of the year. No. Our paper is our Party, our Ideal, our Soul, and our Banner which will lead us to victory."

He flung himself with immense energy into the organizing of the local units. Days and nights ran into each other, finding him ceaselessly at work. He delivered 130 speeches in the space of a few months.

"It is not the quantity which is important, but the quality. I prefer a courageous little band, which pursues its aim with irresistible faith and will, to a vast, obedient flock, which blindly follows its shepherd, but runs away at the first howl of the wolves."

He would not tolerate half-work or half-heartedness in his entourage. He urged and inspired and animated his men. If anybody refused to carry out a mission, or was disinclined to walk over to a neighbouring village, his voice would grow sharp.

"You would willingly walk miles in wind and snow on a cold night only to say a few loving words to a woman. Well, must you not take up this work a hundred times more actively, courageously, and cheerfully if our Party, our life is at stake?"

Thus he inspired people, but even in the first months he came upon difficulties. He could not drive people out of the taverns, and he could not teach them independent thinking. With his two intimate friends—Angelini, the painter, and Gino Giommi, the lawyer—he would go on disputing for long hours on the terrace of the Café Garibaldi.

"The world produces to-day no young rebels, no revolutionists of life and thought, but premature, earnest, and narrow-minded old men whose only aim is to hunt for clients and money. They are ready to bow to the ground and to sell their consciences without hesitation. The leaders of our economic and political life are at present either bureaucrats or professionalists who earn a very good living by their political arts, or they are revolutionists who do not believe in revolutions. Half-men with a half-education and half-knowledge."

"The ideal? To the devil with it. Who cares for it

nowadays? And if there should be anyone who still believes, people declare him to be a dreamer."

"But we shall persist in our faith."

He could not tolerate on his side those who were for ever making compromises.

"Let a socialist be a socialist. Let a bourgeois remain a bourgeois. Only let there be no social peace, no reconciliation, for this means putrescence. The proletariat should separate itself from every bourgeois element, it should make a pact with no one. Only fight out its class war alone, fiercely and ruthlessly. The law of socialism is that of the desert: a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye."

"Socialism is a rude and bitter truth, which was born in the conflict of opposing forces and in violence. Socialism is war, and woe to those who are cowardly in war."

"They will be defeated."

In Milan, Claudio Treves, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti*, read these lines dumbfounded. This blow was directed against him. The Editor of *Class-War* felt strong enough in his little country fortress to interfere with the central direction of the Party, and to make its leaders responsible for their co-operation with the bourgeois Parties, and for the abandonment of the revolutionary programme.

But Treves could have even better things to read:

"With trembling hands I write these lines, for I do not want to give a biography; I only want to offer my last homage before the coffin of my dead father.

"My father was born in 1854 at Predappio, his father was Luigi Mussolini, his mother Catherina Carduni. When he had grown beyond his first childhood he became an apprentice in a smithy at Dovadola. Then he went to Dovia and there opened a forge. I do not know at what time and under what influences he became a follower of the Internationale. But it is certain that when he arrived at Dovia he was already carrying on a great propaganda, and had formed the first organization of the Internationale.

He was thrown into prison. When he returned he remained under police supervision for forty-two weeks. His house always offered shelter and friendship to those pursued by the authorities. Later, when the socialists had come to take part in municipal politics, my father became Mayor of Predappio. In 1892 he formed in Predappio the first Labour Union. He wrote articles in socialist papers, on account of which he was constantly shadowed by the authorities. In 1902, when during the election riots broke out in Predappio, my father was again arrested. . . . The clergy, the police, and the moderates persecuted him ceaselessly. . . . After the death of my mother he broke down. The health of this brave fighter gave way . . . he died.

"He had always been kind and sympathetic. He left me no material heritage, but he left me a moral one—his treasure: the Ideal.

"And now, after this sorrowful burial, I pursue my way, following in his footsteps."

Claudio Treves had not the slightest idea of expressing any sympathy with young Mussolini. He read through the article curiously and flung the paper down on the table:

"What the deuce does this mean? What is this article aiming at? His father has died. Well. Ten lines among the brief news of the day would have done. Alessandro Mussolini, who had been so-and-so, died to-day. The Editor of our review has lost in him a father. That would have been enough, for the old man was not such an important person. Or I should not have minded . . . a sort of article. But this. In a leading place. A eulogy of the father with the signature of the son. What sense is there in that? In this article it is not the father who matters, but the son. The son who feels himself so important a person that he considers it necessary to publish his genealogy. And what a sly fox he is. How he has described and painted the miserable life of his father! The reader is meant to see that his beloved Editor-in-Chief has descended from just such a beggarly proletarian family as he himself. . . . Damned fellow."

Thus argued and grumbled Claudio Treves, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti*. From afar he was already measuring

his rival. For the fighter of Dovia had enough self-confidence, after two years' work, to enter into an open conflict with the Party Directorship. He had begun his campaign against "the most incapable and corrupt Parliament in the world," and against those M.P.s "to whom the Chimborazo of all socialism is their own mandate."

"Compromises and agreements have again proved impotent. But it seems that it is still not enough. A nation is such a strange creature of God, and needs much time before it withdraws its votes and confidence from the charlatans of lobby-politics.

"We can wait. We are not impatient, nor are we pusillanimous. The hour which needs us will strike."

"Why, so we are," murmured Claudio Treves to himself. "This youth feels already the marshal's baton in his hand."

Meanwhile, in Forli, this youth had quarrelled with some socialist companions who did not approve of his constant attacks upon the leaders of the Party.

After throwing them out, he sat down to his writing-table. He was translating Heine's *Reisebilder* into Italian, and his attention was suddenly attracted by the following words:

"The inhabitants of Göttingen may be divided into students, professors, and beasts. It is very difficult to discriminate between the two latter."

In the next number of *Class-War* the Editor wrote thus:

"The M.P.s of Italy are all corrupt and paralytic. But the most serious symptoms of corruption and paralysis are displayed by the socialist members."

"Damned rot," raged Treves. "The sooner we can wring his neck the better."

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST REVOLUTION

MUSSOLINI fought his way forward in the Socialist Party step by step. He was already a dangerous adversary of Milan, which also appeared from the fact that the central and official organ of the Party—the *Avanti*—rebutted his attacks with growing vehemence.

"The Italian Parliament," he burst out again in *Class-War*, "does not work. Two hundred and fifty corrupt and ignorant Members of Parliament, worthy of their leader, Giolitti, are sitting on the neck of Italy. We shall either sweep them out or perish. The ideas by which they govern Italy are only fit for the lumber-room of the last century.

"The Labour Party cannot co-operate with these Parties, for this would mean treason to the proletariat. If I am fighting, I have only confidence in my own force, and I do not dawdle away my time running after the doubtful guarantees of a platonic alliance."

Every word he pronounced was an incitement. He knew that he had to lash up the public. He knew that he had to promise more than the official staff and programme, for only thus could he become popular, only thus could his army grow.

"What does the Labour Party of Italy want with this Parliament? Why does it want to co-operate with the bourgeoisie? Why does it not seize the rotten Government of Giolitti by the throat? What are they afraid of? Perhaps that we shall remain alone? That they will hate us?

"The man whom people hate is strong."

How many years were to pass before nothing should remain of this inciting programme but its last bold sentence: "The man whom people hate is strong." How many years? Who could have known it then?

The summer of 1910 only saw a young revolutionist preparing himself for his first great battle. His eyes were

turned upon Milan, his aim was to overthrow the directorship of the Party. The Labour Congress was held at Milan in October; Mussolini represented the extreme Left. He demanded a ruthless campaign against Parliamentarism, new elections, the independence of the Party from every other political group, syndicalism, and the immediate organizing of a revolution.

He was defeated. The majority of the Party, with the leading officials at its head, rejected his propositions in the most decided manner. The official speakers explained to the public that without arms it was impossible to bring about a revolution, and that the syndicalist principles of Mussolini were not realizable. The Party outvoted him. The *Giornale d'Italia* wrote of him that he was a learned cobbler, and the *Momento* simply called him a Calabrian brigand.

After this first fiasco he retired to Forlì, his little fortress. Thence he mercilessly continued the debate:

"The policy carried on by the Labour Party is not a socialist one. The Labour Party is a bad chemist's shop which has become bankrupt. The Parliamentary faction does nothing. Why are not the Freemasons expelled from the Socialist Party? The Freemason influence has got hold of the directing staff of Labour, but at the same time it also holds Capital in its hand. And the official Socialist Party is working hand in hand with these Freemasons. What is that if not treason? What can help us?

"Only one thing—a revolution."

And indeed a year later he became involved in the first revolution of his life.

In September 1911 Giolitti's Government decided upon the organization of the Tripoli expedition. The whole of Italy was convulsed with excitement.

What would be the end of this adventure?

At the premises of the *Avanti* an important consultation was held. There appeared Filippo Turati, the leader of the Party; Claudio Treves, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti*; and Anna Kulischoff, the fair, delicate Russian revolutionist who had played a great and efficient rôle in the life of the Italian Socialist Party.

The first marine troop had landed that night at Tripoli. What should the Socialist Party do?

"We must stand on Giolitti's side," argued Treves. "We must hold him in our hand, for only our support can prevent him from getting into the power of the extreme Nationalists, who would drive him to carry on an extravagant colonial policy. If we did not support him, then reaction would triumph."

Thus argued Editor Treves, who was moreover a good friend of Giolitti. Turati vacillated. And then the Russian woman interposed with her stormy temperament. Next day the *Avanti* announced in a leading article that the Socialist Party would carry on an intransigent and militant opposition policy with regard to the Tripoli expedition. The thunderbolt had fallen. The fighter stood in Forli before the excited crowd. Holding in his hand geography books and maps he spoke thus:

"Every honest socialist must disapprove of this Libyan adventure. It only means useless and stupid bloodshed. We throw away our money and disturb the peace of Europe for nothing. Here in my hands are geography books and a map. What is this Libya like? A barren, sandy desert—a nothing. What does the Government want to annex it for? Nobody knows. Not even the Government itself. The socialists still less."

The crowd roared with approbation. And the voice of the revolutionist rang out again:

"Colonial expeditions can only be carried out on a basis of precise calculations: so many millions, so many dead, so much profit. If the profit outweighs the loss, then the expedition may be tried. But if—as in this case—the profit to be expected does not compensate us for the dead and for the money invested, then it must not be attempted. And if a stupid Government should nevertheless decide upon the undertaking, then we must make a revolution against it."

Forli revolted, but the revolutionist was once again disappointed by the masses, for in a moment the troops dispersed the howling and rioting mob.

"Cowards," said Mussolini, and he looked with contempt after the fugitives.

Gino Giommi, the lawyer, an old friend of the revolutionist, looked at the young fellow askance and terrified:

"Was not the strike enough for you? Did not the demonstration suffice? Do you want blood at any price? Blood and battle?"

The revolutionist growled back: "What have they done? They put a beam across the bridge to derail the express. They destroyed a few trams. That is terror—cowardice. That is not enough. They should have faced the infantry when it arrived. But they did not. They are no good to me."

The Condottiere turned away furiously from his soldiers. He went home.

His wife was anxiously awaiting him; she was trembling with terror.

He kissed her, and after dinner he quietly took out his violin.

A moment later the revolution interested him no longer. It was Beethoven who had seized his soul, and on this night of beaten hopes eternal beauty arose triumphantly around him.

CHAPTER XIII

BEFORE THE COURTS

THIS little revolution had a sequel. On the 21st of September, 1911, Benito Mussolini was accused by the Tribunal of the following misdeeds:

1. Opposition to the supreme power and defiance of the authorities.
2. Attempts at preventing recruiting.
3. The forcible stoppage of factories and workshops, incitement to strikers and their organization.
4. The violent holding up of tram communication and damage to the rails.
5. The cutting of telegraph cables.
6. The destruction of a telegraph office.
7. The violent seizure of a railway engine.
8. The laying of a telegraph pole across the railway in order to derail the express.

No doubt this list was rather interesting and not too flattering. The accused defended himself thus:

"It was not I who wanted the general strike, but the workmen of Forli. The indictment describes me as if the workmen at Forli were under my power. On the contrary, the majority does not obey me, and they do not do what I wish. The time of persuasive rhetoric is as much past as the time of the apostles. The crowd acts according to its own taste and opinion. And if I say that I approve and have approved of strikes, I mean only economic strikes, which are not coupled with vandalism.

"I may draw out a telegraph pole from the soil as a token of my protest, but I must not put it across the railway in order to derail the train, for the train is neutral. It is full of innocent people, and I am a fighter who would never wish to shed the blood of neutrals and innocents. For me the strike must have a moral goal. It was I who prevented the mob at the station from destroying the post and telegraph office. But I fell wounded.

"And now as to my inciting article.

"On the evening of February 25th a meeting was convoked at which I gave a geographical and historical

lecture demonstrating, on a scientific basis, the uselessness of the Tripoli expedition. In that speech I said that the difference between us socialists and the nationalists consisted in their wanting a greater Italy and in our wanting a free, a wealthy, and a cultured Italy. I cannot help it, but I would rather be a citizen of little Denmark than a subject of the enormous Chinese Empire.

"I did not organize the strike. I am not a workman but a journalist; thus it is not my business to interfere with the affairs of labour. The truth is, that as fifteen thousand workmen had assembled at Forlì, the demonstration and the strike burst out spontaneously from the crowd."

The President interrupted him: "You want to prove perhaps that the strike had a moral basis? You seem to follow the principle that the aim sanctifies the means."

The defendant retorted:

"The famous theory of Machiavelli has been long ago rehabilitated by life and reality, but we need not discuss that.

"I deny and rebut the accusation of having committed all this destruction and vandalism. And now I want to conclude—to conclude like the ancient philosopher, who wrote over the door of his house: 'He who enters rejoices me; he who does not enter honours me.'

"Thus I say, honoured Court: If you acquit me you will rejoice me, for then I can return to my work and to the community of human society. But if you sentence me you will honour me, for then you will not be condemning a criminal but a follower of the Ideal, an agitator according to his conscience, a soldier of Truth, who reckoned upon your understanding, because he felt in himself the great force of truth and of the future."

The Court sentenced Mussolini to one year's imprisonment.

The revolutionist was again thrown into prison, but his one thought was—escape.

Gino Giommi visited him frequently. Together they racked their brains as to how he could get out of there as soon as possible.

He wanted a lawyer, a good counsel to defend him. But the Labour Party would not even hear of taking a barrister who was not himself a socialist. But Mussolini

had had enough of them, for they were all compromised revolutionists and the case of the man they defended was lost.

"Gino," he said to his friend one day, "I have studied the Code. I must get away from here, for the clauses of the law do not refer to me. You have studied with Stoppato; I know that he is a first-rate barrister. Go to him and ask him to undertake my defence. I have not offended the law, therefore I must get away from here."

Old Giommi glanced in surprise at his young friend: "Are you mad? Stoppato is an excellent lawyer, but you know very well that he is a clericalist. You, the revolutionist, defended by a clericalist barrister. Only think what people would say."

The prisoner interrupted him furiously: "That does not interest me now. My aim is to escape."

His old friend became submissive. "Well, well," he murmured to himself, "then I will go. . . . I can ask Stoppato, if you think so? But you do not take into account what people will say to this. You do not calculate what will be the consequence of your step."

The prisoner raised his large, dark eyes. For a moment he looked at his old friend in silence; then he said:

"To live does not mean to calculate; to live means to act."

Even there, in the cold and solitary cell of the prison, he saw nothing before him but his aim. The aim for which one has to fight with one's entire force, with every means at one's disposal, with ruthless energy. The pupil of Machiavelli did not feel at all inclined to sit in prison for a year.

The fighter could not stand the prison, and the Condottiere had no time to write the *Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE "AVANTI"

As the consequence of an attempt at murder made upon the King of Italy, a Parliamentary crisis was reached. At the negotiations one of the leaders of the Socialist Party, Leonida Bissolati, also appeared.

The Editor of *Class-War* found that the time had come to turn against the centre at Milan. He felt that the power over the socialist masses was slipping gradually into his hands. He felt that now he would succeed in carrying through his plans, and he began his campaign thus:

"Bissolati has betrayed the proletariat. If the official leaders have no courage to exclude him from the Party, then we break the last link and form an independent revolutionary party."

The blow struck home. The leaders were obliged to convoke the Party Congress at Reggio Emilia. Here Mussolini once more faced the whole of the Labour Party. He had trained for this fight. He knew and felt that after the Milanese fiasco he must not allow himself to be defeated. He spoke. He was the most extreme, the most inciting—a follower of Sorel, one who would make no pact with anyone.

"Bissolati has betrayed the Party," he shouted to the crowd; "Bonomi and Cabrini have done no better. Podrecca supported the Libyan adventure. These people are no socialists. Clear them out; and get rid of Treves too. One cannot sit on two saddles at the same time. One cannot both make friends with Giolitti's Government and edit the official paper of the Labour Party. That is treason."

He knew what he was saying. He knew that the most important thing, next to the exclusion of Bissolati and the others, was to bring about the fall of Treves. He wanted to get the *Avanti* into his hands. If he were to become the Editor of the central organ of the Party, then he would be in his right place. He would hold in his hand both the Party and the public. He went on inciting:

"There are enough of varnished intellectuals leading

the Party. Workmen, chapped-skinned workmen, ought to get into the front lines. Only a firm and decided will and a straightforward policy can bring about the triumph of the proletariat. Only in this way can our aim be attained, our ultimate aim—the revolution.”

The Condottiere had again become master of the crowd. The public were transported with delight. Bissolati and his companions were excluded from the Party by an immense majority, and Treves was removed from the position of Editor-in-Chief. Who was to take over the *Avanti*? Who was to become the new Editor-in-Chief? The crowd roared one name: Mussolini.

But he was too young. At twenty-seven he could not become the leader and director of the Labour Party. Old Giovanni Bacci was put into the place of Treves. Bacci was a convinced revolutionist, but to edit a journal had never been his business. He possessed neither the elegant dialectics of Treves nor the brutal and inciting force of Mussolini. A few months had scarcely passed before the socialists were again obliged to fall back upon Treves. And Treves, who had been dismissed but a short time before, began again to write his brilliantly composed and carefully polished leading articles—to the great joy of the Government. But the socialists had had enough of this. In December they called Mussolini to Milan. He became the Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti*, and a few months later he held the whole of the Labour Party in his hand.

When he took charge of the socialist paper he was told that on certain days of the week the leading articles were to be reserved for Claudio Treves, but the new Editor-in-Chief retorted: “In a paper which is under my direction it is only I who can write the leading articles. A paper can only be directed by one man and one idea. And I did not come here to let the direction slip out of my hands.”

What had Napoleon said when the Convention nominated Kellermann to lead the army in Italy in collaboration with him?

“I cannot command in collaboration with the man who thinks himself the best general in Europe. Only one man can command an army. Rather one bad leader alone than two good ones together.”

The Napoleon of Italian politics argued in the same way.

The New Man wanted to transform the Party to his own image. He already had his pulpit—the *Avanti*. His leading articles raised the circulation of the socialist paper from 40,000 to 100,000. There was no highbrow argumentation, no abstract reasoning, and no cunning in his plain and simple leading articles. Only solid and massive thoughts. No superfluous eloquence, no protracted deductions. He darted always *in medias res*. To confront the truth openly and nakedly, to find the real adversary in a moment, and then to give a quick stab between the fifth and sixth ribs—that was his method.

"For those who consider socialism an idyllic and pacifist movement, and to those who believe that human life is inviolable, our words may certainly sound like blasphemy. For us life is not the only good, life is not the aim, but the means. Alexander Petöfi, the great revolutionary poet, said that for liberty he would sacrifice his love and his life. Yes. For he who assigns an absolute value to human life, condemns the world to eternal immobility.

"But we want to progress."

The revolutionist, the pacifist leader brought up on the doctrines of Marx, has now begun to develop into the Condottiere who must make his way by his sword.

"The Party must be transformed into a militant revolutionary organization; and in order that this may be brought about it must get rid of the slag of the little bourgeoisie. It must also get rid of Freemasonry, which has completely ensnared it. All cowardice, all fear of conflict, must be extirpated from the Party. Every Socialist must be educated into a strong and self-conscious fighter, for only thus can the revolution triumph."

At the Congress of Ancona he had the Freemasons excluded from the Party. And within a few months he had reorganized the whole of the Labour Party, which found in him the leader who inspired it to swift, decided, and steadfast action. In November 1913 the agricultural labourers got into conflict with the troops. In the country strikes and riots broke out on account of the low wages,

and the starving crowds assaulted the manor-houses. They did not obtain a rise of wages, but instead the troops intervened and dispersed the rebels by artillery fire.

The Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti* turned ruthlessly against the Government:

“What! In Italy, in a civilized State, they fire upon unarmed old men? Upon pregnant women and innocent children? And when the poor inhabitants of Rocca Gorga ask for a physician and for bread, water and light, then the Government has them slaughtered instead of coming to their help. What does this mean?”

An action was brought against him. He defended himself before the Milanese Court with these words:

“I do not deny that it was I who wrote those articles at the time that the massacre in South Italy was wired to us. I wanted these wretched, unfortunate people to feel that they were backed by someone; and for this reason the blows of the law must strike me. I am not an innocent; on the contrary, I am a backsliding sinner, for a great thing compels me to fight—honour. What will be your sentence? Acquitting or condemning? It does not matter. Prison is not an unbearable thing. According to a Russian proverb, to become a real man it needs four years’ grammar school, two years’ University, and two years’ imprisonment.

“Yet . . . I tell you that you must acquit us, and that, not because we have not done what we are accused of, but just because we have done it and intend to do it again. Why do you hate all conflict and opposition? A uniform, unanimous human society would mean death. Gentlemen, by your sentence of acquittal you will honour the ancient philosopher, the sorrowful sage of Ephesus—Heraclitus—who proclaimed that everything was begotten and began in struggle. Therefore let us fight, for if you will think thus you will honour both a great philosopher and a still greater principle: that of Liberty.”

The jury did not frequently meet with such a defendant and with such words. The impression Mussolini produced on that occasion was deep and lasting. By his leading articles and speeches he grew more popular from day to

day. Hundreds of thousands of people swore by him and followed him blindly. This was his teaching:

"We want the socialists to remain socialists and the bourgeois to remain bourgeois. There is no contradiction in this. I do not want to bridge over the differences, I want to deepen them; for differences are a blessing. They constrain us to remain under arms. They compel us to develop and to strengthen ourselves till we can defeat the bourgeoisie, which must either collapse or be transformed under the weight of our subduing force. Therefore do not pacify and conciliate us, and do not modify the differences, for only by the rubbing together of two stones will a spark spring forth, and only by the struggle of opposing forces can a human society of a higher and more pacific order be born.

"The proletariat should therefore train for that great historic conflict when it will be able to settle accounts with its adversaries; for the Italian proletariat needs bloodshed for its force to be renewed."

Nobody dared speak to the crowd in such a bold and revolutionary tone as did he, the New Man, who had not found his place in the old world, and who was searching for the new one. His personality was still in effervescence, his aims obscure, his judgment uncertain and irresolute. He had but one instinctive presentiment—his need to create something new. He knew only one thing with certainty—the means by which he had to fight out his way were not words and talk. No; his weapon was the sword.

He still believed that socialism was the system to which he could adapt himself. He believed that by the victory of a proletarian revolution he would be able to attain the form of State described by Marx and Sorel—a State which would give him a leading rôle and which would grant a happier future to the proletariat. The time was still far off when he would recognize that the narrow and dogmatic system of Marxism could not suit his ardent and explosive temperament. So far he had found only certain faults in Marxism and had tried to eliminate them, but he did not yet see that the system was rigid and impossible, and this was not to be wondered at. He was a

man to make history, one born for action. But at that time socialism was the only active force in Italy. Liberalism and democracy, transplanted from French and English soil, were approaching their highest degree of development in their native lands, but in Italy, in the country which had been suddenly recalled to life after a slavery of seventeen centuries, they were unable to take root. They had had no time to find their way into the soul of the nation and to absorb the peculiarities of the Italian race.

But socialism advanced with seven-leagued boots, and thus it was not to be wondered at that the New Man should have joined this movement with his entire force; but at the same time it was a matter of course that his keen intellect should have noticed the faults and exaggerations of the system.

Besides the *Avanti*, which had now an immense circulation, he founded a review called *Utopia*. In this journal he examined, for the first time, the theoretical system of socialism, the ideal which he had blindly followed since his early youth.

"I can see now that the socialists are mistaken. They believe that capitalism has already reached its highest form of development. On the contrary, capitalism is still capable of development, and it has not yet exhausted its possibilities of transformation. The Marxist theory of socialism is only a reflex of English capitalism. And that capitalism will not fail, however much this may be prophesied. That is a fact. The socialistic theory, in its present narrow form, is nothing but a luxury for scientific people, and has scarcely got anything to do with real life. The great masses have to form a new empire for themselves, and in this work faith matters more than science. Just as it is not implicit that everyone who can read and understand the Bible should be a Christian, so is it possible for us to be socialists, even excellent socialists, without knowing the socialistic literature. The *sans-culottes*, who destroyed the Bastille in one attack, had indeed no scientific education."

A cold and striking critique. The sharp and concise genius of the Italian mentality was for the first time

letting a light into the ordered and rigid barricades of the German intellect. But that was only a minor, theoretical discussion; in his own mind Mussolini was still a socialist. He led the *Avanti* resolutely in an extreme direction, and he vomited fire upon the bourgeoisie.

The Labour Party had arranged the so-called Red Week. Ancona, Rimini, Forli, Ravenna, Milan, Turin, Bologna, and other towns started a strike; red flags were fluttering in the streets; but the whole thing lasted only a few days, for the troops ruthlessly put a stop to this sudden outbreak of revolutionary feeling. Mussolini ordered a truce, for he saw that the conflict was not serious enough.

In 1914, on a brilliant afternoon of July, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti* was sitting in his room when the bicyclist brought in a telegram. The Stefani agency announced officially that the Austrian Crown Prince, Francis Ferdinand, had been assassinated at Sarajevo.

Ten minutes later a special edition of the *Avanti* was carried along the gallery. The crowd swarmed in the streets like a huge ant-hill, and on the lips of everyone the question formed itself:

"What will come of it?"

The Editor of the *Avanti* was still sitting in his room, and around him were his collaborators:

"What will come of it?"

Mussolini glanced through the window into that brilliant summer afternoon, and thus did he answer the silent question:

"If Francis Joseph dies, too, then Austria will fall to pieces."

In that single sentence was indicated the road which he was later to follow.

CHAPTER XV

THE DEATH VIGIL

AFTER some days it became evident that war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia was unavoidable. On the horizon the thunder-clouds of the coming Great War loomed heavily over the world. What would happen?

Italy vacillated. The ancient hatred, which for centuries had inflamed the inhabitants of the peninsula against the Austrian Empire, had immediately after the Sarajevo attempt shaken the Triple Alliance to its foundations.

Fight on the side of Austria?

Never!

Casus foederis?

We would rather be deserters than fight for German interests.

That was the general opinion. The New Man lost no time. He was a socialist; he noticed the general mood, and he knew how to act. His vibrant voice rang out:

"Italy has but one task if she does not want to dig her own grave, and that is *complete neutrality*. Either the Government will take this standpoint, or the proletariat will with all its might compel it to do so."

On the eve of war this was the first attitude of the New Man. It was easy to adopt this standpoint. He was a socialist, and so it was a matter of course that he should be an anti-militarist, especially when Italy was expected to interfere on the side of the Austrian Monarchy. As is well known, the Austrian Emperors had never been socialists, neither could the Prussian King be accused of similar sympathies. So it was evident that the Italian Labour Party, with Mussolini at its head, should from the first moment shrink from the thought of fulfilling the obligations of Italy with regard to the Triple Alliance. And the Nationalists? The Nationalists had neither forgotten Custoza and Lissa, nor the slavery of centuries, which had kept North Italy under the power of Austria. *Casus foederis?* Those pupils of Machiavelli, the cold and cunning politicians, had not undertaken engagements with a view to keeping them, if the interests of the State should make it allowable to break them. Therefore the

article, which showed Mussolini to be among the ranks of all those who were against the war, was but the logical consequence of his career up to that day. He was a man of action. In secret he hurriedly ordered the leaders of the local organizations to Milan. After a conference of several days and nights it was decided that, if Italy wished to enter the war on the side of the Germans, the Labour Party would prepare a general strike and civil war. Mussolini announced his intention quite openly in the *Avanti*. On July 27th he wrote these words:

"If the Government should take no notice of the unanimous public opinion of the country, then we would immediately put an end to the armistice we have kept since the Red Week, and we would start with the greatest resolution a war for ourselves. The proletariat is keeping guard. The moment Italy drops her neutrality and supports the Central Powers, the Italian proletariat have but one task—we openly declare it—revolt."

This fierce *fortissimo* was his last pacific speech. On the redly looming horizon the clouds were gathering.

CHAPTER XVI

W A R

ON July 29, 1914, Giessler, the ambassador of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, left Belgrade. From Budapest to Vienna, and from Vienna to Berlin, enthusiasm and intoxication swept like a tremendous cyclone. From Paris to London, and from London to St. Petersburg, the tension almost reached breaking-point. An awful storm flashed through the sultry air of summer, and an apocalyptic frenzy roared in its thundering echo.

Over the earth Death rode with hollow, thudding hoofs.

It was a strange, weird midsummer night.

In Budapest, from the palace of the Prime Minister's residence, a gloomy man glanced over a raving city. He had been the only one who had tried to stop the black onrush of events; he had been the only one who had wanted to prevent that frightful catastrophe. He stood by the window, silent and motionless, like a solitary and gigantic statue. The last granite monument of the Past, the Man of Yesterday: Count Tisza. There he stood, and the chilly breath of destiny passed over him.

In the south, in Italy's brilliant international hotels, music died suddenly away and the dancing couples stopped. The hoarse shouting of newspaper boys could be heard in the streets, and Russians, French, Germans, and Hungarians snapped up the papers with feverish haste. A moment later, in the great halls, there were to be seen none but silent people, buried behind newspapers; faces which avoided each other, eyes which were fixed like searchlights upon an unknown future, coils of smoke rolling together into clouds, and gestures which flashed up nervously over the ash-trays.

The young German, who but a few minutes before had been whispering the most ardent compliments to that blonde English lady, now felt as if some fine, invisible curtain had dropped between them. The champagne remained in the glasses, and outside, in the park, the palm-trees shivered with sudden fright.

And the New Man sat in his editorial room and faced the New Age, which for years had thrown its shadow over his

road and which now appeared before him like a gigantic spectre. His flaming and feverish youth, his ardent and unchecked temperament, stopped dead. He felt—he had to feel—that on this night something much greater had happened than what he had hitherto been fighting for.

Up to that day his life had been but an ardent youth: the holy negation of every sort of compromise, every sort of cowardice, every sort of half-heartedness. He was a soldier, a bold and resolute fighter for an ideal which he had blindly followed, and for a system which he had thought to be eternal. And now had come this unknown spectre. It had come with a thrilling hush, and with its huge black wings it had swept the stars from his sky.

The griffin glanced down at the eaglet. The fighter was confronted by—WAR.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

THE German Army had swept down upon Belgium and was rushing towards Paris with demon swiftness. Over the limitless meadows of Russian Poland and the sloping hills of Galicia blood-red waves were rolling.

The hour of action had struck.

It was at this time that Mussolini lived through his own great, inward drama. He felt that, with those articles that had contributed to the non-participation of Italy in the War on the side of Austria, a whole period of his life had ended. He did not know himself of a certainty that this period was the end of his socialist career, for he was still the idol of the workmen. But this blood-tainted summer the nationalism, hitherto deeply hidden in his heart, flamed out.

On dark and stormy evenings he meditated for hours. He remembered the prison, the Austrian prison, which he had also known. Why had he been arrested then? What had he written in the newspaper of Trient, edited by Cesare Battisti? "The frontiers of Italy do not end at the Ala but far beyond it." And what had he said when the attempt at Sarajevo took place? "When also Franz Joseph dies, then Austria will fall to pieces." Austria was now fighting hard; for Italy this would be the best opportunity finally to settle accounts with her.

Italy? But he is still the leader of the revolutionary socialists, the apostle of internationalism. Up to now he has proclaimed that the proletariat has no country, and now shall he step forth inciting to war, like the Nationalists?

No, that he cannot do, for he would be acting in contradiction to his career up to this day; he would lose his popularity with the masses; he would fail.

It is best to remain neutral, to remain merely silent spectators of this dreadful conflict. We should look on quietly while others, with swords in their hands, break their way through the gates of the new age, proceeding towards an obscure future. We should sit in well-bred silence and await what will happen. Either the one or the other will occupy the luxurious table of the future. And

what then? Some tiny crumbs will perhaps fall to us also. Some tiny crumbs which we shall have to beg for.

But this is pure folly. He cannot do this because his innermost self would collapse, his own character would break in two, for his life is fighting and not expectation.

What shall he do?

If he decides for neutrality he breaks down within himself; if he decides for war he loses his popularity. Whether he steps to the right or to the left, on either path he must fail. There is no writer who could create a dramatic situation more cruel than this.

In his mind thoughts chase each other feverishly. His writings at that time are the eruptions of a mighty and turbulent soul.

"Two chances are before Italy," he writes in the *Avanti*. "If the Entente should be victorious, then Italy has nothing to fear; if the German alliance should triumph, then—although Italy's neutrality was perfectly righteous—Austria, intoxicated by its victory, might easily send out a punitive expedition against North Italy."

All this is written down so simply, without drawing any conclusions. What would these be? They would involve war, and socialists must be pacifists. But might not one harmonize socialism with war? If he were able to prove that socialism wanted this war, then he would have solved this problem, which had assaulted his soul, and solved it without risking that dreadful thing—failure.

Let us wait. In Belgium, Vandervelde, the leader of the moderate socialists, has formed a coalition with Ansele, the communist, in order to save the Belgian territory by force of arms. Frank, the German socialist M.P., falls in the attack at Lunéville, and according to his last words he is happy in dying for the greatness of Germany. The French, Russian, German, Austrian, Hungarian, and Serbian socialists are by this time all fighting. Are only the Italians to remain inactive?

"War and socialism have hitherto meant a profound and unbridgeable contradiction; but now it seems to me impossible not to pay attention to certain other points of view. One cannot deny facts. One must confront realities because we cannot lull ourselves into illusions."

Thus he writes in the *Avanti*. How his former hard and direct style has changed, how he turns the words about, how evasive he has become, how he gnaws his thoughts. He staggers and vacillates. He, the fighter, the merciless fighter, tries to make a compromise between his real self and his principles.

But now there is no longer time for irresolution. A name rushes through the whole of Italy, a name the bearer of which has been hitherto only famous for his brilliant writings and scandalous adventures. A man who is a late incarnation of the Cinquecento, a bizarre mixture of a genius and an eccentric, of a poet and a Condottiere—Gabriele d'Annunzio. He comes, makes a tour round Italy, and with his radiant eloquence preaches everywhere—demanding in the keenest and most resolute manner war against Austria. He comes, and has an immense success. The Government does not listen, but the youth of Italy follow him enthusiastically.

The thunder of a military march storms down the streets, and the excited crowd raises on its shoulders the poet who comes among them to demand—WAR.

How different is this crowd, with shining eyes and eager faces, from his associates, brought up on rigid dogmas and dusty tomes. And what about the poet? Is he to be the new leader? He scrutinizes him sharply; they are to encounter again, more than once.

September.—The Labour Party convoked a Congress in order to decide whether it should still remain on the side of neutrality. It was necessary to come to a decision because in Italy demonstrations in favour of war had become very frequent, and the Labour Party had to show that it was holding out to the uttermost for neutrality. All the more because, even in the Labour Party, there was already a fraction which strongly supported the war. And this fraction would even have a speaker. Who was to confront him? Who was to defend the original standpoint of the Labour Party for neutrality and peace? Who but Mussolini, who had demanded it most energetically, immediately after the attempt at Sarajevo?

They summon him. He accepts, and starts with gloomy face for the Congress.

Is it to be expected that the man who, his whole life, has longed to sail over new seas will furl the sail just when the wind is rising? Is it conceivable that the eagle will not fly when it has the use of its wings? Is it conceivable that the fighter will stretch out his hand for his pipe when bare swords are flashing around him? Is it conceivable that the New Man will preach neutrality while other nations are probing the future with the points of their bayonets?

In the great hall of the Congress electric sparks of excitement were crackling. In this intense and burning silence the New Man rose to take his decisive step towards the New Age. He was pale and excited.

In short and abrupt sentences he outlined the struggle of the proletariat to the present day. He spoke of the outbreak of the war, and indicated why the Labour Party had pledged itself to be on the side of neutrality. Then he began to speak of what should be the tasks of the future.

Silence already gripped the hall at his swift, excited words. . . .

On the highroad of European civilization a bandit had appeared. The peaceful citizen must be armed with a Browning. . . . Neutral Belgium had been trampled underfoot by Prussian militarism. . . . The Kaiser . . . And then . . . when everybody expected him to explain why, even in spite of all this, the Labour Party had to remain neutral; suddenly, like a flash of lightning, the final conclusion burst out:

"But it is you, France, that we love."

The phrase was unexpected, the effect electrical—roaring enthusiasm, turbulent contradiction. Everybody felt in this speech the quivering breath of the coming storm. And the man above the murmuring crowd continued to speak, with a feverish, high-pitched voice:

"I have preached neutrality, it is true. . . . Up to now I have spoken against the war, but it is only the dead who do not create new thoughts, and only madmen who persist convulsively in their manias. . . ."

He was applauded. He had won the first battle. He had succeeded in conquering the Milanese fraction of the Labour Party for the war. But this was only a local fraction. The country, the other towns, the whole of the Labour Party, were still left, and although the Editor-in-Chief of

the *Avanti* had, up to that time, held them in his iron hand, he did not know of a certainty whether they would follow him on the new road.

Mussolini, who had pursued revolutionary socialism as his final aim and as the only possibility, now threw himself with his entire force into the war propaganda. The speech, which had burst from him at the Milanese Congress, was the loudly calling voice of youth, which, with its impatient and stormy temperament, drove him with ever-growing strength from one extreme to the other. In the *Utopia* he had already struck the imperialistic chord, remarking that the victory of Italy allied with the Entente would, instead of the mere domination of the Adriatic, mean the command of the Mediterranean. But that was only a little slip, the fiery flash of the new thought, which was not yet followed by the complete light.

No. He was at that time still the Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti*, and he showed no desire to let the Labour Party slip out of his hands. He had still to prove that the war was in the interest of the proletariat.

On October 10th he wrote a leading article entitled "From Absolute Neutrality to Relative Neutrality." In this article he foretold the Russian Revolution, fulfilled three years later, the fall and dissolution of the German and Austrian Imperial power—and then he continued thus:

"Do you perhaps believe that the State of to-morrow, whether it be socialist or republican, will not carry on war—either at home or abroad—if historical necessity should compel it? And who can ensure that the Government born of a revolution may not have its baptism in war? Would you be therefore against such a war as was to save the revolution? He who makes no difference between one war and another, who considers all wars alike, is just as foolish as he is pig-headed."

This was already more than enough. The leaders of the Labour Party, who up to now had been suppressed by Mussolini, found that the time had come to stab him. They began a merciless agitation against him, and convoked a meeting at Milan for the 25th of October. Their aim was

to exclude Mussolini from the Party as a traitor to the proletariat.

The New Man stopped dead. If he took part against the war he would come into conflict with his own soul; if he supported the war, his own Party would bring about his downfall. The dramatic situation, from which he had thought to escape by a reconciliation between war and socialism, now rose up before him to its full height. It was not possible to persuade the Labour Party that the interests of the proletariat demanded the war. The socialists were not inclined to go back upon their previous education and renounce their principles; they did not want to tread the new path for which the will of the leader was fighting almost alone.

What should he do? His blood and temperament had carried him too far to allow him to return. The Labour Party, which hitherto had idolized him, now turned against him. He saw, he had to see, that he was attacking a fortress which would never again be his.

What should he do?

It is a characteristic quality of new men, and great creative spirits, immediately to drop their plan when they perceive that its realization meets with insurmountable obstacles. This requires courage and boldness. Nay, it needs even more—it needs genius.

Caesar also gave up the attack on Gergovia, nor did Napoleon worry himself for long about the Turks before Jaffa. Mussolini had not deceived himself with the hope of being able to hold the Labour Party. No; he stood before a new situation, and in an instant he decided. He resigned his post as Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti*, and thereby left a position for which, up to his twenty-seventh year, he had fought with such fanatic faith and tireless energy. He so completely renounced it that he did not even take his salary, and refused also the grant of some thousands of lire which had been voted to him for his efficiency.

He went away.

The Army of the Kaiser was already sweeping down on Paris; and the knight-errant stood in the street alone. He had to begin life afresh.

CHAPTER XVIII

"IL POPOLO D'ITALIA"

HE did not despair. When he abandoned the seat of Editor-in-Chief of the *Avanti* he knew already that he had lost the masses. He had to feel yet more: how alone he stood. It did not matter. He felt himself strong enough to recruit new masses. He knew well that a fraction of the Labour Party would come after him if they only saw how he found his feet again. But how could he do so? Well, if he were now to identify himself with the current of thought for which he had abandoned his party, his position, everything, if he became the most ruthless and energetic supporter of the policy of war; only thus could he capture the marvellous new crowd which he had seen raging around Gabriele d'Annunzio. The youth which was storming with such intoxication through the streets, longing for conflict and for the ruin of Austria—the ancient foe.

If he only had a newspaper!

He got one. On the 13th of November, 1914, appeared the new journal, *Il Popolo d'Italia*.

Where had he procured the money for it? From the French, wrote the socialists on the first day. Others pretended to know that Lord Northcliffe, the powerful English Press-king, the almighty exponent of the English war propaganda, had backed him up. There was not a day on which the socialist Press did not publish constantly fresh details of the bribing of Mussolini and particulars of his treason. He did not bother about them. Why, he could not even pay his collaborators. As for the rest, it did not matter what they were shouting about; he had done with them. He belonged now, with every drop of his blood, to the newspaper in which he could at last freely write what he wished.

The name of the journal had been a political masterpiece: *Il Popolo d'Italia* (*The Italian Nation*. Thus no longer the international masses.) Under the title a striking subtitle, *Quotidiano Socialista* (*Socialist Daily Press*. Therefore every socialist workman can read it with a clear conscience.) Then came two keen sentences at the head of the paper:

"'Those who hold the sword have the bread.'—BLANQUI."
 "'The revolution was born on the points of bayonets.'—
 NAPOLEON." (Therefore we represent the true revolution.)

In these two sentences lay the real programme of the journal. In the first moment it might perhaps have been a trick to catch the socialist masses, but during the following weeks it became a sword by which they swore, and after some years a flag leading to victory. The first article whizzed forth like a cannon-ball. The whole was as follows:

COURAGE

"Continuing my march after a brief repose, I fling to you my call, O youth, youth of Italy, youth of the workshops and universities, who have your heart and soul young, who belong to the generation which has to make history, according to the command of destiny—my call, which will resound into the future.

"This call is but one word, a word which I have never pronounced in times of order, but which I pronounce to-day, boldly, without reservation, without irresolution, with clear voice and strong faith: a word rebellious and terrifying: WAR.

"BENITO MUSSOLINI"

The voice with which the New Man speaks to the masses is the old, energetic, and resolute one. Short, fiery, seditious articles, no reasoning, no philosophizing. We live in times when there is no need for knowledge but for faith, when not the reason has to decide but the heart. Fascism was born in these first leading articles of the *Popolo d'Italia*, at the moment when the New Man, throwing away the Labour Party, discovered for himself the new one: the youth of Italy, which was not yet infected by the doctrines of obsolete systems; which had will and hardihood; which could live—but could also die.

Since he has his own newspaper, in which he can speak freely, since the discipline of the Party does not oppress him, he feels himself to be a free fighter, and he plunges with entire force into the battle. He delivers one speech after another; he reasons, agitates, incites to war, and his stormy temperament drives him in an extreme direction.

There is not a Nationalist, there is not an Imperialist, who could demand war more vehemently. On December 13th he delivers his famous speech in Parma, and by it starts the avalanche which swept the majority of the workers into the ranks of the militarists. He spoke thus:

"Besides the pacifist movement of the bourgeoisie, which is so insignificant that it is not even worth speaking of, another international movement has arisen: that of the proletariat. This movement failed at the outbreak of the war. The German socialists, who should have given an example of international solidarity, swarmed to the banner of the Kaiser. The treason of the German socialists compelled those of other countries to adopt the standpoint of the national ideal and of the national defence. The unanimous attitude of the Germans had, as its automatic consequence, the unanimous nationalism of the other States. Internationalism is like love: there are two persons necessary to it, otherwise it is not worth anything. Internationalism has come to an end. The Internationale of yesterday has died, and to-day we do not yet see what will be the Internationale of to-morrow."

He throws away internationalism like a squeezed-out lemon. He has already taken his stand on the basis of a national idea. Boldly he strikes an audacious blow at his old friends:

"One cannot deny facts. The fact is that millions and millions of men, the majority of them working men, are fighting against each other on the blood-soaked soil of Europe. People who defend neutrality answer to this: Down with war! But they do not notice the grotesque stupidity which hides itself behind such an exclamation. It is cruel irony to cry: Down with war, when there are so many who fight and die on the battle-fields.

"To-day one has to move, act, fight, and, if necessary, one has to die. Neutrals have never dominated the future. The neutral has always remained in a subordinate position."

Already he sees nothing before him but Italy. Peace? Pacifism? To the devil with them.

"The sounding wheels of history are driven by one force—Blood."

The Caesarian phrase hisses and flashes over the masses

like a fiery rocket, which pierces the dark horizon, diffusing a brilliant light over the battle-field.

A moment's silence. People cast down their eyes before the blinding flood of light, and then, like the simultaneous sound of thousands of trumpets, the war-cry rushes through their ranks:

—Down with Austria!

Who is the man who has lashed them to this frenzy? Who was he but yesterday? An extreme revolutionist. Who is he to-day? An extreme nationalist. Two months before he had still preached Marx in the *Avanti*; to-day he incites to war. What is waving in his hand? The red flag or the red shirt? What is resounding from his lips? The trumpet of Gabriel or that of Satan?

There is no time for meditation. We are running with seven-leagued boots towards the future. The Austrian monarchy tries to persuade Italy still to remain neutral. Prince Bülow, the German Ambassador in Rome, promises new territories. Sonnino negotiates. Berchtold falls. . . .

The New Man makes no compromise. From November 1914 till the spring of 1915 his life was but a daily demand for war. He stood, his head buzzing in the ceaseless artillery-fire of his leading articles and speeches. Is he to yield? Is he to negotiate?

Never.

The 2nd of May, 1915, Mackensen breaks through the northern front at Gorlice, and the Russian Army flows back in disordered waves. In Budapest, Count Tisza, the Prime Minister, finds that the psychological moment has arrived. He instructs the Foreign Minister immediately to resume negotiations with Italy.

In the South, the New Man finds also that the moment has come, but not to negotiate—to act.

What had Guiccardini said? "Pray that you may always hold to the stronger." Italy had already compromised herself too much for the Entente—which had seemed the stronger—to resign herself to its defeat.

This is the moment to declare war. One must stop Mackensen.

What is Rome doing? It still vacillates.

There is no more time to lose. The cannons of Mackensen are already assaulting Ivangorod. . . .

July 15th.—The leading article runs thus :

“The future and honour of our country are in danger.
Italy has come to the most terrible crisis in her history.
People of Italy, it is for you to decide.

“Either war or a republic.

“MUSSOLINI”

This cruel and terrible fortissimo runs with the force of a thunderbolt through the masses. But there is no longer need for it. The street, the town, the whole country is but one roaring flood, sweeping away every obstacle with elemental force. Flags are flying, eyes are flashing, faces are flaming, while with rhythmic stamping the song resounds :

Abasso Austria,
E Germania,
E la Turchia
In compagnia.

July 24th.—Rome has decided. Italy has abandoned the Triple Alliance and declared war. The streets resound with the steps of passing troops, and in the *Popolo d'Italia* the New Man sounds the battle-cry of the New Age :

“To-day the nation has been called to arms. Henceforth there are but Italians. To-day, when steel is striking against steel, only one cry bursts from us: *Evviva Italia*. We have never felt so strongly as at this moment that we have a Fatherland; we have never felt so strongly as now that Italy is an historical personality, that Italy is something embodied, living and immortal.

“And now, our Mother Italy, we devote to you, without fear, or sorrow, all we have: our life and our death.”

The next day the Tyrol sounded with cannons. Amidst blood and tears, amidst the lamentations of the wounded and the fugitives, through flashing showers of shells and the hollow thunder of grenades, through flaming villages and blackened dead, the New Man started towards the Future.

PART II
THE CONDOTTIERE

CHAPTER I

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

"AFTER a cannonade of twelve hours a great white silence has sunk over us—the snow. We are all buried."

—On the summit of the Javorcek, in a miserable dug-out, the soldier bends over his diary by the pale light of an oil-lamp. Instead of the tumult of cannons, now silenced, the marvellous majesty of night reigns over the sleeping mountains. Here and there the yellow ray of a reflector strolls about the wire-entanglements; one or two fiery rockets flash up, to sink and be buried, the next minute, in the great hopeless whiteness of the snow.

How had he come here? Why had he come here? From the quiet writing-table to the ante-room of hell? Here, where life has not the value of a farthing. Certainly he might have been exempted from military service, he the agitator who had disturbed the unity of the Labour Party—if he had only asked for it. "One cannot deny one's country, just as the tree cannot deny the sun which has nurtured it. To deny one's country is as bad as to deny one's mother."

The New Man, who had been transported by the storm; the socialist, who had discovered his own country in the tempest of the cannons; the agitator, who had enlisted on his side a new party of enthusiastic youths; and the fighter, whose soul was heated by the tropical flames of an eternal warfare, could not remain at home when time sounded its alarm.

"We who take on our shoulders the fatigue of the trenches and the deadly risks of battle, we want to be in security from the rear. Keep guard and watch. Do not give a moment's quietude to the cowards and to the pusillanimous. We shall fight, you must fight also. This is my good-bye, this shall be your programme."

With this sentence Mussolini laid down his pen, and a week after he had already marched to Friaule with the regiment. The journal remained without its leader; for a long time only the diary spoke.

"My neighbours talk softly of the harvest, of wheat, beetroot, and hemp, and of the market-prices, as if they were interested in nothing else."

Around him are Calabrian peasants, noblemen of Piedmont, sailors from Naples, tradesmen from Rome. Races divided by the servitude of centuries, by the discordant dominions of tiny duchies, kingdoms, and republics. The Genovese does not understand his fellow-countrymen from Palermo; the man born in Bergamo has no idea what the Italian from Puglia is saying. Men who know each other's town only by hearsay, and who scarcely understand each other's language. In peace-time the Sicilian never meets the Venetian, and the Florentine never sees the Calabrian. Now they are all here, to be welded together in the lightning whirl of blood and fire. United Italy is struggling now in the first great conflict it has had for twenty centuries. Will it endure this trial, and will there arise out of this great war the united Italian nation, or will it again fall to pieces under the dreadful pressure of the eternal northern enemy?

The simple soldier feels the breath of a historical epoch vibrating along the wire-entanglements. He feels it, and writes thus in his diary:

"On the River Tiber Italy was born; and on the River Isonzo it was reborn."

One week after another passes by. Weeks and months, long cruel months. The private soldier is nominated Corporal, and the regimental order justifies this nomination by the fact that he has been the foremost in battles, and foremost in the acceptance of work and fatigue. The diary of the little Corporal continues thus:

"Stormy nights. The wind blows through the ruinous beams. A Siberian cold."

"Snow, snow, snow."

"May God give us just a little sunshine."

"After so much snow, at last a brilliant morning; on the shining horizon, the marvellous outline of the snow-white mountains. Far away, tower the pyramids of the

Dolomites. Behind them a purple brightness indicates the rising sun."

"If only I were a poet!"

The diary unrolls with ballad-like swiftiness, narrating in a style perfect in its beauty and poetry the events of the winter of 1915. It speaks of the refreshing mornings, and of how their dewy fragrance is shattered in an instant by the frightful howling of grenades; it describes the starry, soundless night, the yellow dead sleeping in its shadow, and the wounded carried bleeding down the roads while its quietude lasts.

Amongst the gigantic rocks of the Carst the little Corporal reads in the evening the works of Mazzini, and writes on the margin the following note:

"One cannot execute great things with a protocol. The secret of power is will."

May 1916.—The regiment is relieved from its post, and after a brief repose transported to a new one.

"Along the shores of the lake lie the wrecks of human bodies. Unburied dead hang crucified on the wire-entanglements.

"Black and white birds swing over the water crisped by the morning wind. This is the lake of Doberdo. He who lives long on its shores forgets for ever to smile."

Night.

The little Corporal stands sentinel. He takes a hand-grenade.

The others look at him.

"What are you doing?"

"I saw opposite the light of a cigarette. There must be men there." Already he has seized the hand-grenade and pulled the string. He holds it in the air, counting:

"Twenty-one, twenty-two. . . ."

The others are chilled with horror. This fellow always holds in his hand the dangerous instrument till the last minute.

"Twenty-three."

The bomb flies. A thundering detonation, then silence. The next day some new prisoners come into their hands, and say that there were two dead and five wounded.

The Captain is passing by just at the moment when Mussolini throws the grenade. Shaking his head, he turns to the little Corporal:

"Why did you do that, my son? They were sitting peacefully and not doing us any harm. They were smoking their pipes in silence, and perhaps talking of their brides. Have you no heart? Why was it necessary to send them to death?"

"If that is so, my Captain," was the reply, "then perhaps we had all better go for a little promenade to the Milanese Corso. That is certainly a more agreeable occupation."

In the evening he takes Mazzini out again, and writes on it the second marginal note:

"That man triumphs who wants to triumph. He is victorious whose energy is the strongest."

Now the pages of the diary become more stormy:

"Midday. The sky is full of clouds. A dreadful cannonade."

"Dead and more dead."

"This is a cruel fight on the cruel Carst. Life and Death point our way to Trieste."

Swift and abrupt sentences:

"I could not sleep. . . . The earth trembled, and the detonations constantly shook the walls of our cavern."

"We burn in the eternal fire of cannons."

"A silence of some days, then again fighting. Cannonading . . . cannonading . . . cannonading. . . ."

"Christmas evening, but which of us cares about it? The sky is lead-coloured, and the fog is slowly sinking over our heads. Along the trenches lie the black funnels of exploded bombs."

"To-day was the Christ born, the King of peace and justice. In the sad, smoky trenches tiny candles are flaring."

"Well, to-day is Christmas. Just to-day—the 25th of December."

"The third Christmas of the war."

"The date does not mean anything. My heart has already grown as hard as this dried-up cavern."

"And yet . . . it seems as if a dream passed before my eyes. On this returning day I must recall my past youth."

"Twenty-five years ago I was a bad and disobedient child. Some of my former friends bear on their heads the traces of my stone-throwings even to-day. From morning till evening I strolled about the meadows, with the instinct of a nomad, and I robbed the fruit-gardens and the nests by the river-side."

"The Christmas of past times is still living in my memory. At that time there were but few men in the village who did not go to the Christmas Mass; my father was one of them."

"I remember following my mother."

"The church was resplendent with brilliant light. On the centre of the altar, in a flowered cradle, lay the Child. Everything was so picturesque and so beautiful, everything seized my imagination so strongly. Only the odour of the incense made me uncomfortable, and sometimes I felt intolerably sick. At last, with a resounding peal from the organ, the ceremony finished. The crowd filled the streets. Everybody was talking gaily. And then came the dinner, the festal Christmas dinner. Joy, happiness, contentment. . . ."

"How many years, how many centuries, have passed since then? In the trenches reigns the silence of eternal sadness."

The unruly child had already known the school of misery and suffering. He had drudged through Switzerland and had undergone imprisonments. He had stood at the head of the Labour Party which had borne him towards the red folly. And then had come the war, the cruel reality, which had torn to pieces the dreams of youth and pushed him forwards on the road which he could never leave again. The socialist agitator, the fighter for internationalism, had become the prophet of nationalism; and of the little territories, jealous of each other, not even acknowledging their

mutual interests or understanding each other's language, had been born, in the fire of battles, United Italy.

How many years, how many centuries, had passed since then? "I think with deep melancholy of that Unknown Soldier who sinks mutely into the earth, while above him Spring, with all its fragrance, is passing by."

All the horror of ten Isonzo battles pulsates in this single sentence. And from the blind obscurity the hero of the new age steps forth—the Unknown Soldier. Who is the Unknown Soldier? Italian, English, French, German, or Hungarian? All of them. The one fought from duty, the other from pride; the one from enthusiasm, the other for honour. But they all stood firmly at their posts and held their ground.

They were men.

The little Corporal bends over his diary. He sees the end of the war—the silenced trenches, the immense common graves, and the military cemeteries, where, over the gates, the inscription shines:

"Enter, Italian, and say a prayer for the poor dead, who are all alike before Our Lord."

CHAPTER II

"I WILL NOT DIE"

—THEY brought in Mussolini.

—Mussolini? How?

—He had been wounded.

After he had been a minute in the military hospital at Ronchi, they spoke of nothing but Mussolini, who was lying with a dangerous wound on the operating-table. Till now nobody would believe that the Editor-in-Chief of the *Popolo d'Italia* could be in the trenches, in the first line at the Front. Yes, somewhere behind it, at the headquarters, or perhaps even with the regiment as a secretary or telephonist. But at the Front? In the path of death? The socialists at home had pretended that he was displaying his bravery only behind the lines.

And he was lying unconscious on the operating-table. His body was tattooed with forty-two wounds and scratches: the splints of hand-grenades and stones. His shoulder and arm, his breast and side, were full of them. He could not move his left leg.

Wound-fever: 39 . . . 40 . . . 40·5 . . . The thermometer rose by leaps and bounds. The doctors were already fearing complications; they thought that he would not live to see the dawn.

But his strong constitution overcame the fever. After some days, although he had to lie motionless, he was chatting joyously with the doctors, visitors, and nurses. He asked for the newspaper and read it. And every day, without a sound, he endured the handling and cleansing of his innumerable wounds.

"You must certainly suffer very much from this painful immobility," King Victor Emmanuel once remarked when, on a visit to the military hospital behind the lines, he stopped before the bed of the Editor-in-Chief of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

This was his first meeting with the King. I wonder what the thoughts of these two men were when they saw each other for the first time on this rainy spring morning?

The wounded fighter gave some kind of answer to it when he wrote the following lines to his faithful collaborator Sandro:

"I am proud of having contributed with my own blood to the opening of our road to Trieste."

He suffered for forty-two long days in the military hospital at Ronchi, then he was transported to Udine, and from there to Milan—home.

The doctors did not allow him even to stir. Yet with great difficulty he got up in his bed:

—"I shall not die, because I will not die. I shall not die even if all the doctors explode with fury. No doubt medical science says that I cannot remain alive, but I snap my fingers at medical science."

In August 1917 he could already get up, and at the end of the month he was able to go home. He hobbled down to the cab on crutches. In September he appeared at a general rehearsal at the Scala. By that time he had thrown away the crutches and leaned on a hooked stick.

The public greeted his pale, nervous figure with applause:

—Mussolini! Mussolini!

The wounded man recovered. The fighter returned to life, and his old weapon flashed again in his hand: the pen, which, like the sword, was of steel.

CHAPTER III

NO RETREAT

FROM Russia strange news leaked across the frontier. Who would have believed that the most powerful monarch in the world, the Tsar of all the Russias, would be thrown into prison? Who would have believed, that in the country where the State had held everything in its hands with iron fist, a revolution would triumph through the overwhelming force of the general longing for peace?

The Italian plenipotentiary minister had reported, only three days before the outbreak of the Revolution, that in Russia everything was quiet, the Tsar was absolute master of the situation, and there was nothing to be feared. And three days later everything collapsed with a frightful crash. Instead of the proud names of the Romanovs, new stars glowed on the horizon. Kerensky . . . and a strange new name, Lenin, who was already an adversary even of the republic, who demanded the immediate conclusion of peace, and who was the most popular among all the leaders of Labour.

The wave, which had started from Russia, inundated the front lines, and even reached Italy. The soldiers began to desert, to leave the trenches, the militarists were insulted in the open streets. On the verge of despair an exhausted country watched over the feverish dreams of the battle-fields. The whole of Italy seemed to be standing before a frightful collapse, and but one word, but one cry, burst from all lips:

—PEACE.

The answer was not long in coming. Into the black chaos of despondency and lamentation, despair and defeatism, the thunderbolt of a horrible piece of news fell from the North. Between Tolmein and Caporetto the enemy had broken through the defences and were pouring down in a huge cataract from the heights of the Carsts. The Isonzo, for which hundreds of thousands had shed their blood, was lost. Dispersed and shattered, the Italian army fled in disorder southwards.

The defeat at Caporetto had a disastrous effect upon the country. The news which came in the first days from the

Front reported the catastrophe of the Italian Army to be a fatal one. Nobody knew any details, but it was said that the allied German and Austro-Hungarian troops were in a frightful preponderancy, and their daring rush was not to be resisted. There was no force which could have stopped them, there was no man who could have confronted them. The scattered Italian Army lost their heads and fled, leaving the plains of Lombardy undefended.

These were the first reports. The exhausted and discouraged country was now completely overwhelmed by terror and despair. Such fear now seized Italy as she had felt but once before, when the news of the disastrous victory of Arminius and the reports of the massacre at Teutoburg had reached Rome. In the general chaos the public turned with the frenzied rage of despair against the Italian Commander-in-Chief, Cadorna, making him responsible for everything, just as did the elderly Augustus, who called Varus to account for the slaughtered legions.

Some days later appeared the Declaration of King Victor Emmanuel, which, for the courageous, was the first sign of resistance, but which, to the cowardly, only enhanced the feeling of peril and disaster:

—"Italians, citizens, and soldiers!

—"All of you are one army. Every cowardice is treason, every disturbance of order is treason, every accusation is treason."

The eye of the fighter flashed, the forgotten journalist sprang to life. Time had now struck his hour on the alarum of terror.

The New Man again raised his voice to show the road to the Future. The soldier, whom the Labour Party had cast off as a backslider, and whom the public had wellnigh forgotten during his two years' service at the Front, now suddenly emerged from behind the red blaze of the struggle. In these critical days his leading articles demanded the settlement of accounts, neither with the partisans of war nor with the partisans of peace; they did not search and examine the origin and cause of the catastrophe. No. The New Man felt that at this moment he had but one word to say, he could send but one cry out to the whole country,

both to the fleeing Army and to the despairing public—STOP.

The *Popolo d'Italia* was the only source from which people could draw faith and courage in those days. The words of Mussolini reached even to the front lines, to the ranks of his old companions. They found their way to the dull and lethargic public, and they roused the barracks, where seventeen-year-old boys were taking up arms—the youth of Italy which still dared to die, the last reserve, which was now flung with desperate force northwards into the cannon's mouth.

After three terrible and cruel weeks the Italian Army gathered up its entire strength, and succeeded in planting its foot on the banks of the Piave. The whole of Italy drew a deep breath. From Savoy roared the trains conveying the auxiliary French and English troops towards the river. The nightmare had passed. The waiter once again smiled cheerfully in the coffee-house, the merchant stood again quietly behind the desk, and people went about their business as they had done before.

The Editor-in-Chief of the *Popolo d'Italia* felt that he had come to a new phase of his life. He who had been the one to urge Italy's taking part in the war had seen clearly the moral defeatism which laid hold of Italy before Caporetto. He had seen the new leader: the Unknown M.P., and he had seen, too, that the thoughts which had flamed up with such vehement ardour in 1915 had now completely disappeared. He had tried to confront this black flood, but hitherto it had come to nothing. For who would listen to the wounded soldier, when everybody was only trying to save his own precious person? The circulation of the *Popolo d'Italia* diminished and its importance was almost lost.

Then came Caporetto.

The mournful night of defeat, which revealed in its entire nakedness the putrescent inner life of the nation; the hour of blood and struggle which time has always created for the New Men. That "STOP," which at the first moment of catastrophe had sounded from the lips of Mussolini, pushed him again to the foreground, because the desperate always find pleasure in gathering round faithful souls. People began once more to talk about him and his journal,

and he—being a thoroughbred journalist—knew very well what this meant.

The time had come for him again to fight his way to a prominent position. The hour had come which justified his opinion that the war could be no longer carried on with despondency and resignation. The time had come to put an end to all faint-heartedness. He would not yield, neither would he see his country yield.

"Is there one man among you who remembers the meeting which we held three years ago, in one of the squares of Rome? We demanded the Declaration of War. The police dispersed us then, but we were right. We marched on, and history marched with us."

Thus, in the Augusteum of Rome, did he begin that famous speech by which he came once again to the front.

"Do you remember? Before the May of 1915 Italy had no courage to live, for she had no courage to die. We made a great mistake then, but we have atoned for this mistake by the war.

"After three years of struggle, and after Caporetto, we want to resuscitate all that was pure and immortal on that brilliant May day.

"I have seen the Italian soldiers, for I have lived among them the simple life of the simple private. I have seen them in all the variations of military life. I have seen them in the barracks and on the highroads, in the trenches and in the caverns; I have seen them under fire, when the death grenades were ceaselessly falling upon them. I have seen them, as they held their breath, while waiting for the officer to give the order: *Avanti*. I have seen the sons of Italy, and I tell you that they are no mere soldiers but saints and martyrs.

"Of course, you may ask now: How then did Caporetto happen?

"Let us examine the situation and confront the naked truth, as is due to a great nation.

"Yes, our defeat was, in the first place, a military one. But secondarily it was not that.

"It was caused by a great lie, which has hitherto been the foundation of our national life.

"This lie is called—Political Freedom.

"Freedom? Yes. But freedom to commit treason to our

country—to murder our nation? This liberty is the most frightful paradox.

“It seems a crime even to imagine that when men are being armed and sent to death without being asked, when they have no free will and can make no protest, when the soldier is severely punished for the smallest transgression of an order, that, at the same time, others should be able to hold secret meetings behind the Front, and to abuse those ideals for which hundreds of thousands die on the battle-fields.

“Yet it happened. What does this prove? It proves that the wildest demagoguery can rage unpunished in Italy.

“This is not the time for lamentation, for quiet and comfortable politics. It is not for angels that this demoniac war has been waged.

“I demand resolute men, *a single resolute man*, who has courage enough to knock down and ruthlessly to punish, who has force to hang the cowards, for the more of them that are hung the better.

“You bring before a court-martial even the simple soldier who had deserted for a few days in order to meet his family, but you take no notice of the man who betrays his country. You shoot that soldier, and I approve of it, for I am in favour of iron discipline. But one cannot measure by two standards. And therefore if now, after Caporetto, an M.P. steps forth and dares to say that war is useless slaughter, then I demand that this M.P. shall be imprisoned, punished, and shot.

“I have preserved in my heart the memory of my companions who fell on the Carsts and the Alps. It was not a desire for profit and advantage which drove us forward in the front lines. We only wanted people clearly and openly to recognize that we had fulfilled our duty. And now, here we are again to fill up the breach with our bodies, and to call out a word which has been forgotten at home: STOP.

“There is no way back, there is no retreat. You may brood over it as much as you like, there is nothing else left to be done.

“The game is such a desperate one that it must be carried on, for there is but one issue: we shall be either conquerors or conquered. There is no other choice:

"Life or death.

"If there is anyone who wants, not peace, but to carry on the war, then do not look for him among the ranks of the fighting nations, but seek him in the clique of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. These are the enemies of humanity, and before such an enemy you cannot kneel down.

"We, the Latin race, keep straight."

This was his first great speech during the war. Its effect was tremendous; the whole of the Augusteum echoed with frenzied enthusiasm. He did not rest. He saw that the road he had taken was the right one; he saw that he could not stop or negotiate in this struggle.

He delivered one speech after another. The spring of 1918 he used for making a tour through the whole of Italy. To-day he was speaking in Modena, to-morrow inspiring people in Parma, the third day preaching in Florence, the fourth radiating his belief in victory to the crowds of Bologna.

". . . We shall get our second wind. In nature, in the words of women, in the smiles of children, in the blossoming of the trees, everywhere we can feel this great revival. The blood begins to circulate in our veins again.

"There is no retreat, there is no compromise. We *must* march, straight and irresistible to victory. Russia and Roumania have abandoned the Alliance. They have concluded peace, but what sort of peace?

"Had the Leninist policy any leading principle, for the sake of which they were justified in subscribing to the humiliating peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk? Yes, it had. The Bolsheviks believed that their revolution would contaminate the whole of the Continent, and that finally they would get the upper hand in all parts of the world. But this great revolution did not succeed.

"Why?

"Rome had a Cicero in the critical hours of its history, but Russia was satisfied with a Tchitcherin, whom nobody could take seriously, for you cannot take a man seriously who is not daring enough to defend his own person.

"The Russian attempt at peace was only useful to us. It was of use, for Italy was able to learn from it, that only by arms could she obtain her rights. For this reason there is no excuse, and there can be no mercy for those men

who at home speak of peace before a military decision is brought about.

"The war, which started as a democratic movement, has meanwhile changed into the breeder of a new aristocracy. The soldiers will become fighters; and the future belongs to the fighters. We, who are to outlive this frightful struggle, we want to govern Italy, not in order to throw her over a precipice, but to raise her to the stars."

Here one could already hear the voice of the Condottiere. He saw the crowd upon which he was to rely. He saw, and he knew that the fighters at the Front were the very men to fight out their future by the sword. He pronounced these words on May 24, 1918, and the thought of the Marcia su Roma already glowed in this sentence.

He was till far off from that. But this thought—the confession of an ambitious soul—burst involuntarily from his lips. Perhaps he regretted even having said it. At that time it was not a question of what would happen after the victory. They had to triumph—that was the first thing.

In June 1918 the Austro-Hungarian Army started the Piave offensive. Terror swept once more through Italy. What if Caporetto were to be repeated? What if the enemy were again to succeed in breaking through? . . .

The figure of the Condottiere emerged once more in the fierce storm of the struggle.

"Yesterday we were still asking: Have we enough coal, have we bread, have we any fuel?

"To-day we care about all that no longer. To-day we are asking: Have we steel enough, have we iron enough to forge bullets and bayonets?

"We will endure cold, we will endure hunger. It does not matter. We will to conquer. We have to conquer. We shall conquer."

The blood-tainted waves of the Piave washed thousands of dead towards the sea.

CHAPTER IV

WILSON OR LENIN?

"THE Austro-Hungarian Army is annihilated. The remains of the army, which was one of the strongest in the world, abandon in hopeless and disordered flight the valleys into which they had descended with such proud security."

Thus on the 4th of November 1918 ended General Diaz's order of the day, announcing the collapse of the military front of the Austrian Monarchy. Behind the fighting army the inner lines had long ago collapsed. Italy, by the exercise of unheard-of efforts, had succeeded in preventing the disruptive effects of disaffection, defeatism, incitement against war, and cowardice at home; but in the Austrian Monarchy all this corrupting and poisonous matter completely triumphed. Nevertheless the victory appeared to Italy all the greater and more glorious. Throughout the whole peninsula one could see nothing for weeks but triumphal processions.

Everybody knew that a few months more and eventually all that had happened on the other side might have happened in Italy. No wonder that when this nightmare fell from their souls, when they read the victorious report of Diaz, when they felt the dreadful murmur of the collapse which reached their ears from Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest; when they saw the endless lines of dejected war prisoners passing in the streets, no wonder, then, that at such a moment this tormented country flamed to heaven in a paroxysm of triumph and relief. For the instant there was not a man more popular than the King, there was not a statesman more eminent than the Prime Minister, Orlando, and there was not a greater general in the world than Diaz, the Commander-in-Chief of the "Victorious" army.

The name of the New Man was completely lost in the roar of exultation and in the burning enthusiasm and intoxication. When he had been a socialist, they had feared him. When he had gone over to the side of the war, they were transported with enthusiasm. When, after

the fatal night of Caporetto, he had preached endurance to the uttermost, they had still listened to him. But now, in the ecstasy of victory, beside Orlando and Diaz, he had to eat humble pie. Who cared now for the editor of a little newspaper, in the midst of the enthusiasm for the powerful Prime Minister and victorious General? It was they who had procured victory for Italy; they were the leaders; they had to point the way to the future.

The future? There is no need to point the way to that; it is a matter of course. Italy has sacrificed five hundred thousand men for victory; therefore she can rightly demand a large share in the great feast. To the north the frontiers must be pushed as far as Brenner. On the north-east Fiume and Dalmatia must be snatched away from Yugoslavia.

The Italian troops have already marched into Fiume and occupied Zara. But that is not enough. Italy must receive a part of the German Colonies. A new life will now begin on the peninsula. There will be a great boom in industry and commerce. And those who have risked their lives for the Fatherland will receive work, a prosperous life, and a due compensation. [The easily excited Italian nature, in its ecstasy of victory, chased these rose-coloured dreams as a child runs after the rainbow. Why should not all this be possible? To-day it is Wilson who is the leader, the new Messiah, who, with his famous Fourteen Points, has pronounced to the old age the second Sermon on the Mount.

Thus Italy exulted in her frenzied enthusiasm. Indeed, who was there to listen to the little editor who was incessantly telling them that the real future of the nation could only be secured when employment could be provided in the national service for the immense mass of men streaming back from the Front—that army of heroic fighters who had waged and won the war. This seemed a matter of course to everybody. But they only said: “No impatience, we must wait a little. Wilson will arrive shortly, and then, when the Peace Conference begins, Italy will receive all she demands.”

The dream was bold and enthusiastic, its collapse was swift and dramatic. Wilson arrived in Europe; he visited also Italy, where at first he was received with stormy

enthusiasm. Rome presented him with a golden she-wolf, Turin with a bronze tower, from Florence he got a splendid edition of Dante, from Genoa the complete works of Mazzini. But the great enthusiasm began suddenly to evaporate. Strange news filtered through from the entourage of the President. Count Macchi di Celere, the Italian Ambassador at Washington, who had accompanied the President across the ocean, began to hint that the prophet, who had proclaimed the rights of self-determination for all nations, thought that the self-determination with regard to Fiume and Dalmatia did not belong to Italy, but to the newly formed State of Yugoslavia. The startling news ran with alarming swiftness through the whole Peninsula. First, it was not believed, but when the Peace Conference of Versailles assembled, they were at length convinced that rumour had spoken the truth. Although Orlando, the powerful Orlando, the Prime Minister of victory, delivered some splendid speeches, he met with no success. What indeed could this poor little country solicitor do against the old Tiger, the dried-up American Professor, infatuated with his own system, and the fiery Welshman, who were then deciding the fate of the world?

A few months after the intoxication of triumph Italy awoke to realize that the fruits of her victory were in danger. Orlando, the hitherto idolized Prime Minister, shrank into a grey nothingness, and the drama drew rapidly to a close. After the dissipation of dreams and illusions, the great problems of the Peace piled themselves up in their naked reality before the country.

There was no money, agriculture was exhausted, the factories could not be readapted to peace production, and commerce vacillated in utter insecurity. On the one hand, there was Labour trembling lest there should be a reduction of wages because of the return of the Army from the fronts, and on the other was this great army of demobilized men knocking hopelessly at the factory doors. In France every ex-service man received a presentation of 250 francs; in England a large sum was voted to be apportioned as a yearly grant, according to the decorations obtained. But in Italy they could not even vote the miserable ten lire, which should have been paid for every

month spent in the trenches. The grey-green army, which for years had daily risked its life, on dropping back into civil existence was not even sure of its next day's bread. War invalids, decorated for their bravery, were begging in the streets, former officers were acting as shoeblacks, but the great mass had no job at all. Throughout the whole history of Italy the question of how to provide for the veterans after her stupendous wars, had always been the greatest of her problems. Marius and Sulla, Pompey and Caesar, Antonius and Octavianus to a great extent owed their rise or downfall to their success or failure in dealing with this problem. And now, after the first great war following on a servitude of twenty centuries, this same problem rose before the country, with all the cruel force of historical consistency.

While, on the one hand, failure in providing for the demobilized army increasingly poisoned the atmosphere, on the other hand the day was drawing rapidly nearer when socialism would get into power. The Labour Party, which had formerly excommunicated Mussolini, and which had fought against the declaration of war to the uttermost, now considered that the time had come to take up action:

Was it for this that 500,000 men had been sacrificed? Was it for this that war had been declared? Were we to be abused and vilified because we had always preached peace? Yes, we had indeed said that war was a useless slaughter. Who had been right?

Was it a wonder if the irritable, inflammable Italian temperament inclined to believe these words, which bore the impress of truth? Was the growing popularity of the socialists to be wondered at, when, after a complete disappointment in Western capitalist-democracy, extreme views got the upper hand in the working classes, leading them to turn their eyes to Moscow, and fixing them on the new faith.

But this was not yet enough. Besides the exasperation of the soldiers back from the Front, and the commencing revolt of Labour, a third destructive force was also at work: that of the politicians, who even in the most critical hours of history on the eve of dramatic conflicts between races and nations, classes and parties, keep their

foolish and ingenious habit of trying to bridge over opposing interests.

Yes, there were politicians who proclaimed that one should make a compromise with everybody. First with Wilson: thus the Italian frontier should not reach to Brenner, Fiume should remain neutral, and so forth. Afterwards, at home, we should carry on somehow. Here a little compromise, there a little concession, but one could not possibly abandon Wilson, because Wilson meant democracy.

At this decisive hour, on the threshold of doubt and chaos, it was the poet who raised his voice. Gabriele d'Annunzio, the greatest Italian writer of peace-time, the boldest Italian air-pilot of the war, then threw out his famous phrase, the most murderous, the cruellest, and the most striking thing which was ever said of the President of the United States of America:

"Wilson, this horse-cheeked false prophet, is the greatest humbug earth has ever carried on its back."

Nobody caught up this bold and deeply injurious invective so quickly as the New Man, who was struggling in loneliness between the dangers of these uncertain times and the fear lest his personality should be forgotten. The reply to these words of the poet followed like lightning from the *Popolo d'Italia*:

"One must not sell the living, and one must not betray the dead."

Mussolini had again found himself, and the direction his will should take. The man who, before taking part in the war, had assured France of his greatest sympathy, now turned sharply round against Paris and Versailles, the Western capitalism, Wilson, and Clemenceau—in one word, against all those who stood in the way of Italy's future. He went to listen to the speech of Leonida Bissolati, who tried to prove that there was no need for Italy to annex Fiume or to push her frontiers as far as Brenner.

Mussolini heard the speech out to the end, and when the public showed itself curious to listen to him, he rose, deathly pale, to his feet, and flung three vigorous words at Bissolati, Wilson's friend:

"No. No. No."

Already he saw everything clearly. He could hear the slogan which they proclaimed. He could hear the two names: Wilson and Lenin. Democracy or Bolshevism. One must choose between these two.

Youth awoke in him, youth the great and holy negation of every idol men adore. He heard the two names, he felt the two ideas, and his eye finally rested on a—third. Between the impotent and cowardly bourgeoisie, and socialism rushing towards the red folly, he turned to those masses which with him had exulted and plunged into war, and which, after having faced the terrible risks of life and death, were now scattered hopelessly all over the Peninsula.

CHAPTER V

THE ORGANIZER OF THE FASCI

MUSSOLINI took up work with feverish swiftness. His quietude of a few months, to which he had been compelled by the treatment of his wounds, and by the general uncertainty, now turned to an extreme of energy, which spurred him to unprecedented swiftness of action. His aim being in view, he had to assemble around him and to organize the army of the fighters and ex-service men, that immense mass of the dissatisfied, which, besides the ever-strengthening communistic groups, was one of the actively revolting forces all over the Peninsula. And he had to hasten, lest someone else should seize the leadership before him. The Arditi, the "Hardies," as the members of the assaulting columns of the war were called—these bold, decided, and exasperated young men, prepared for every adventure, had already formed themselves into a league. There were also some other leagues of the same type, but not one of them possessed a leader who could bring adhesive force, order, discipline, and united will-power into their ranks. There was nobody who could hold together that gigantic mass, that dispersed army of broken existences, desperadoes, adventurers, fighters, and heroes. There was nobody who could shout into their ears the slogan: "A qui è l'Italia? A noi!" ("To whom does Italy belong? To us!")

The New Man had to come that this might happen. The New Man, who had observed in the trenches that in the cruel hours of battle, where the game was going on for life and death, every individual conviction and every party discipline was dissolved. He had seen how an immense mass of men could be lashed by a single ideal, by a single will towards the greatest of all things—death. He had to come, in whose soul the thought had already dawned during the war, that Italy must be ruled by the fighters and ex-service men. He had to come, that he might form the new leading class: "the aristocracy of the trenches"—that energetic, undaunted army, which should raise him on his shield, and which he should lead to victory.

He had two adversaries before him. The one was the State itself, the liberal, democratic State, which he instinctively hated, because it was unable to defend the country against the capitalism of the Western Powers, and because it had not secured a subsistence to the ex-service men; the other was the socialism or communism, which looked with the greatest disgust at everybody who had raised his voice in favour of the declaration of war.

He had to be quick. On account of the weakness of the State, the horror of communism drew dangerously nearer. Red flowers were already being sported in people's button-holes, and along the walls enormous letters shone gloomily: "Long live Lenin!"

Throughout the whole country communistic demonstrations were being held; small public meetings where they abused the war and abused the peace, proclaiming the one, infallible idea, which could be the only possible prevention against all misery, all disappointment, all increase of prices, and all danger imaginable. The quickly enthusiastic and quickly convinced Italian people began to meditate. Why, perhaps these communistic chaps were right. Perhaps all the newspapers were only lying, and the horrible news diffused about the cruelties of the Bolsheviks was nicely exaggerated.

On the 18th of February, four months after the Armistice, Bolshevism appeared in the streets. Ten thousand men, women, and children, an enormous, terrifying mass, stormed down the Milanese streets under huge, red banners. Resolute, darkened faces, sparkling eyes, clenched fists, a gloomy song rose from their ranks: the march of the Third Internationale.

This imposing demonstration went on for three hours. During these three hours the air trembled with the cry: "Down with the militarists! Long live Lenin!" The immense crowd swept undisturbed about the Piazza, nobody interfered with them, the police and the troops remained in the barracks.

But a month after this the Fascio was formed.

On the 23rd of March 1919, in a lonely square on the outskirts of Milan—the Piazza del Santo Sepolcro—on the premises of the Merchants' Association, the first troop assembled in the greatest secrecy, absolutely unsuspected.

They were a hundred and forty-five men, and they were all old soldiers who had fought in the front lines. In the chair was the Editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

He spoke in short, swift sentences, outlining the events which had happened since the end of the war.

He told how the great army of brave fighters, who had gained the victory, was now dispersed hopelessly all over Italy, for the Government could not secure their return to civil life. It was true that up to that time a few militant associations had been formed, but without united leadership they would never be able to succeed. He recalled to their remembrance the symbol of the Roman power: the fasces—those staves of the lictors. Each single stick separately was weak and fragile, but fastened together they represented an unbreakable force. Therefore he proposed that the union that was to be formed, and in which every soldier from the Front was to be united by *one* powerful will, should be named "FASCIO." (Its full name is *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*—that is to say, "Association of the Italian Fighters.")

Further, he proposed that they should start at once a propaganda for the organization of the whole country. The proposition of the Editor-in-Chief was accepted unanimously without discussion, and thus the Fascio was formed.

They came before the public with three declarations:

I. The first salutation of the Conference of March 23rd is addressed to the memory of those who died for the greatness of our country and the liberty of the world; we greet all the war-invalids and disabled, we greet every old fighter in the war and every captive. The Conference wishes to represent their common interests with the greatest energy and resolution.

II. The Conference of March 23rd declares itself an enemy of such an imperialism on the part of other nations as should be directed against Italy, and declares itself an enemy of such an Italian imperialism as would, in turn, threaten other countries. It accepts the League of Nations, provided the members have equal rights, and on condition that the League should

satisfy the righteous pretensions of Italy with regard to the Alps and the Adriatic, and that it should not oppose the annexation of Fiume and Dalmatia by Italy.

III. The Conference of March 23rd obliges the Fascisti to prevent by every means in their power the candidature at the elections of those who have previously displayed, or now display, anti-militarist behaviour.

The whole is but three articles, yet from these three short sentences the Fascio sprang. The first point is an appeal to the old soldiers. Come all of you into one army, whether you be men of the middle class or workmen, peasants or University graduates, adherents of the civil order or anarchists, come and be welded together by one common thought, for your own interests. A great and mighty past joins you—the trenches, where once before you put aside the old political and social oppositions. Come to me all of you, you who are dissatisfied and rebellious, you who cannot resign yourselves to live your lives as a broken existence. Come around me, all of you, you whose hearts have been hardened by fighting, you who do not recoil from action when its hour has struck. Nobody can stand against your force, your hardihood, your resolute will. You will overthrow a socialism brought up on musty books and a Liberal Government exhausted in tiny squabbles. I call you to life, you who are the new aristocrats, men of force, action, movement, and will power—aristocrats of the trenches, I summon you to take in your hands the government of Italy!

Such bold thoughts sparkled behind the first article of the Declaration. The second article was in itself a political masterpiece. The declaration against imperialism made it possible for the more progressive elements to join; on the other hand, the claim for the annexation of Fiume and Dalmatia was calculated to satisfy even the nationalists.

The third article was the indication of the proper direction and methods of the conflict.

Direction: against the pacifists, because the ex-service men could not expect that any good would come of their getting into power; against the socialists, communists, and

the extreme left of the middle-class parties. And against the Liberal democratic Government, which had produced by its impotence all these destructive forces.

The means? No parliamentarism and no talk. Every possible means are to be employed according to the Declaration. Into the hands of those men who had worked in the trenches with guns, bombs, and bayonets, he did not put a feather-duster to tickle the nose of the adversary. No: "We want a military organization, because we stand before a conflict like the war."

"I was the man who proclaimed in 1913 that the proletariat needed a baptism of blood, a memorable day. Since that we have lived through thousands of such days, because the bloodshed lasted for three years. In those masses, which on account of the cowardliness and impassivity of the Government since the war have sunk into decay, the revolution, which began in 1914, is still alive.

"Therefore we should prepare for the struggle, because it must come. It will be a fight against the cowardly and impotent Government, but it will also be a fight against the communists.

"We revolutionists, the revolutionists of the trenches, are in many respects Conservatives. One must preserve something of our Western civilization: the liberty of the individual and the liberty of the soul, which cannot be trampled down either by Leninist dictators or by Prussian corporals, because the triumph of these two forces would mean the return to barbarism."

There were but one hundred and forty-five men around him. Fighters in the front lines they all were. The leader looked at them. He did not ask anybody what he had been before the war. He did not inquire about the past, but he looked for the strong will. The recollection of the demonstration of the 18th of February thrilled through him, before his eyes again rose the enormous, fanatic crowd which had sworn allegiance to the red banner. He knew very well what that meant. He had known the leaders from his Swiss days. He knew that Italian communism was organized according to their instructions. He knew that this terrible army could not be faced, especially in Italy, with the wooden swords of Liberalism.

What had Machiavelli said:

"The normal means are insufficient, nay even injurious, under such conditions. Therefore we must employ extraordinary means: violence and arms; but, above all, we must procure for ourselves unlimited authority over the State, in order that we may dispose of it according to our own ideas."

The New Man glanced again over his bold little troop of a hundred and forty-five men—this kernel of the great army of "blackshirts" to be. He sent them away into the night, in all directions, with the command:

"For every life, another life; against every barricade, another barricade."

The political agitator disappeared. The man standing there was already the Condottiere, who, at the head of an enormous host of dissatisfied desperadoes, had begun to thunder at the gate of Life.

CHAPTER VI

"INITIUM TUMULTUS"

THE Condottiere had, as a political agitator, known the masses pretty well. He knew that if he could give but a glimpse of the possibility of peaceful work and of future power, then the dissatisfied army of ex-service men would follow him without reserve.

He was not mistaken. On the premises of the *Popolo d'Italia* odd and eccentric people began to meet. The leaders of the Arditi (the assaulting columns of the war) were almost daily guests. They represented the extreme opinion, and proclaimed themselves to be for immediate action. These men had formerly volunteered for the assaulting columns, and of course they could not now deny their nature. It was no wonder that this little army of foolhardy men, greedy for adventure, was already, at the first moment, ranged round the Condottiere. And there were the Futurists, the representatives of a new energetic movement in art, and a movement without system. At the head of this literary assaulting column stood the famous poet, Marinetti, who was driven by his ardent nationalism into the camp of the enemies of the increasingly threatening Bolshevism, and the increasingly cowardly Government. But others came also. At the beginning there gathered with them even those anarchists who also had been soldiers, and, for this very reason, hoped to find some opening in that camp. And there came the Nationalists of the Left, for the Condottiere took care that the Fascio should include in its first programme the organization and enlargement of public libraries, gratuitous medical treatment, measures for public health, and the abolition of rank and titles. There came and dropped in also those ex-service men who had once been members of the Labour Party. They could join the Fascio because its programme also included the eight-hour working day, the liquidation of all limited companies, financial undertakings, banks and exchange, the valuation and taxation of private property, the confiscation of unproductive incomes, the reorganization of production on the basis of insurance, the direct participation

of the workmen in profits, the suppression of private speculation, and the abolition of secret diplomacy. The agriculturists could join too, because, according to this programme, the land belonged to the man who cultivated it. And the idealists and extreme Nationalists could also come in, for the programme proclaimed that Italy demanded her share in the government of the world, this lofty position being due to a nation of forty-two millions of men, living on the ancient Peninsula.

In this confusion of ideas and programmes there were but two fixed points around which the chaos could crystallize; the one was the memory of the months when all these men lived together in the front lines, and the other was the longing for some opening or possibility of work. And the third point was the personality of the leader, the Condottiere, who played on his thousand-stringed instrument with the perfect mastery of a great artist.

Whilst embittered and exasperated men were meeting at the premises of the *Popolo d'Italia*, in the streets the Bolshevik propaganda showed increasingly threatening aspects. Demonstration followed demonstration, people of a more distinguished appearance were thrown out of the trams, soldiers were mocked at and abused, and everybody was already reckoning on a socialist and communist majority at the next election. From Budapest alarming news had arrived, communism had actually broken out there, and it would certainly pursue its devastating course to other countries.

The price of bread rose, the value of money sank, and riots became so frequent that the foreign journalists staying in Rome wired home that the outbreak of a revolution might be expected any moment.

In April 1919 the Communist Party had already grown so bold that it had placards printed in glorification of Lenin. The Government, which had hitherto tolerated the almost weekly strikes and riots, had now at last to put a stop to all this. It prohibited the meetings to be held where Lenin was glorified and confiscated the placards. The reply to this was a general strike. The circulation of the nation's blood stopped dead. Gigantic masses of strikers strolled about the streets, shouting for Lenin, insulting the bourgeoisie, and breaking the shop

windows. Here and there the Carabinieri (members of the Italian police) were commanded to go against them, and this led to serious conflicts, but as a rule the rioters could go on ravaging all over Italy.

On the 15th of April thirty thousand communists assembled in the Milanese arena under red banners. They raged through the town, hurrahing for Lenin, and approached the Piazza del Duomo with a threatening force.

Where were the police—the troops? They stood motionless with grounded arms. There was nobody who could face the demonstration, people flew frightened into the houses, and shut themselves up in terror behind the shutters. But suddenly, on the Piazza del Duomo, around the monument of Vittorio Emmanuele, a little troop was to be seen, standing in serried ranks, revolvers in their waistbelts, and in their hands the *manganello*—a short cudgel worn on a strap. Every eye was turned towards the Piazza Mercanti, whence you could already distinguish the sounds of the Communist March. The first red flag appeared, and behind it the long winding masses of the procession. The next moment the first revolver was fired off, and from the pedestal of the Vittorio Emmanuele monument the little troop flung itself over the huge mass, like wild wolves rushing upon a sheepfold. Stones flew, revolvers cracked, cudgels were whirled in the air, and the dead lay silenced for good on the pavement. The unequal fight lasted for an hour, but finally the attackers triumphed. Crying, lamenting, with broken heads and bleeding wounds, the communists fled from the square and disappeared into the narrow streets. The victors pursued them as far as the Eden Theatre, and then suddenly returned, starting towards the premises of the *Avanti*.

Armed workmen barred their way. The revolvers were again fired, the sticks were again lifted, and the first offensive troop of the Fascio forced its way into the premises of the *Avanti*. After ten minutes the huge rotating machines lay scattered about in pieces, the furniture of the rooms was broken, and a great outburst of fire flamed up from beneath the ruins. Leaving the wrecked house, the troops passed along the streets, shouting that they had succeeded in destroying the organizer of the strikes—the *Avanti*.

Half an hour later they stood again before the premises of the *Popolo d'Italia*. The victorious leaders of this street fight: Marinetti, the famous poet, Vecchi, the head of the Arditi, and C. Rossi presented themselves before the Condottiere. The Fascio had won its first battle.

The next day, in place of the red placards, others, new and daring in tone, were to be read in the streets of Milan:

"We did not wage our battle of yesterday in order to save or to serve the corrupt and dying Government, which actually rules over Italy. Our battle of yesterday proclaimed that those four millions of victorious fighters who have returned from the war have the full right and will to govern the New Italy. We do not provoke conflict, but if our rights are going to be denied, then we shall add a few months to our four years' service at the Front."

The Condottiere knew pretty well how much the first victory meant. He knew that its echo would resound all over Italy. He knew that this would be the best propaganda for the organization of the country sections. To-day he held in his hand but a few hundred of men in Milan and the suburbs, but this number must swell to hundreds of thousands if he really meant to triumph.

He had to be quick. The communists, frightened in the first moments by this daring attack, which had swept away the demonstration at Milan, now regained breath after the first defeat, and were turning against him, foaming with rage. His life was in perpetual danger. The editorial premises of the *Popolo d'Italia* were guarded day and night by armed Arditi.

In June 1919, Rosa Luxemburg, the German communist, was killed, and at the appeal of the German Communist Party the strike broke out again in Turin. This was enough to serve as a signal for others to follow. The majority of the working class had already joined the communists, the consequence being that in June the Soviet was actually formed in five or six towns. In Spezia the Soviet republic lasted for three days; the police had to blow it to pieces by artillery fire. In Bologna the majority of the municipal council were already communists, and Red Guards were formed in many places.

The Cabinet of Orlando fell, and the Government of Nitti took its place. In August, Nitti made the King sign the famous decree of Mortara, which proclaimed an amnesty to all deserters and refugees of the war.

The complete demoralization of the country began. There were riots in Turin, Florence, Alessandria, Brescia, and Pisa. In Milan, Bari, Genoa, Naples, Venice, Catania, and Rome the Soviet was formed. The first act of the communists was to demand everywhere a fifty per cent. lowering of prices, and the merchants who did not give in soon had their shops pillaged.

In Milan a well-dressed man could no longer walk in the streets, for he would be the next moment struck by a stone. The Reds chased the invalids, and insulted the officers in the open streets. Nitti published an urgent decree, wherein he summoned the officers not to appear, if possible, in uniform in the streets. They should dress in mufti if they wanted to take a walk.

The little army which had gathered round the Condottiere was already seething with rage. Ardent discussions rose, night after night, in the room of the Editor-in-Chief of the *Popolo d'Italia*. Especially the Arditi, the leaders of the assaulting columns, urged interference in the conflict. But the Condottiere still waited. He was not only a soldier but also a politician. He knew that he had owed his first victorious battle more to the sudden surprise of the adversary than to his own force. He did not want to enter into the conflict till he had organized a strong army. In him also the desire to fight and struggle flamed up, yet he snubbed the impatient:

"A revolution? To me a revolution is not a sort of St. Vitus's Dance, or sudden epileptic seizure. A revolution must have, above all, force and method, and only then can it go into action."

He continued to organize with incredible energy. He travelled from town to town, speaking and agitating amongst the ex-service men. On the 22nd of July, 1919, he arrived in Florence. While throughout the whole of Italy red flags were flying, he demanded before a vast crowd a final settlement of accounts, not only with communism but also with its spiritual progenitor—social democracy.

"I protect everything which may elevate the Italian

nation, and I oppose everything which may abase it. To be a revolutionist *may* be, in certain times, the pride of one's life, but when a revolution gets into the hands of scoundrels and parasites, then we should not fear even to be called reactionaries. In full recognition of the Italian economic situation, I reject every attempt which strives to lead Italy towards Bolshevism and thus to thrust her along the road to ruin. We shall prevent and try to wreck such a movement by every means in our power. I have strong confidence in the future and in the greatness of the Italian nation."

Thus spoke Mussolini. And in the feverish hours of organization and propaganda strange news was wired in all directions from the Bay of Quarnero. D'Annunzio—at the head of some Arditi, picked up in Ronchi—had forced his way into the bay (which had been declared neutral by the Peace Treaty of Versailles) and occupied Fiume. The town, which by the Peace Treaty was intended to be turned into a buffer-state, now, by this foolhardy *coup*, had got into the hands of the Italian nationalists. The international troops retired in great haste to the monitors and warships anchored in the bay, and D'Annunzio became the absolute ruler of the town. He defied all the Powers, he defied his own Government, and he cut the Peace Treaty into pieces with his sword.

Mussolini was dumbfounded by such "cheek" and daring. The poet had outrun the politician.

CHAPTER VII

"CANNIBAL ANTE PORTAS"

MUSSOLINI had scarcely come to himself after the stupefaction of the Fiume revolution, when new events overwhelmed him. The communistic agitation seethed up on a scale hitherto unknown. In Turin they stabbed a colonel on active service, and in Bologna they shot down in the open streets a young nationalist student. They robbed the shops; when the Government accused the Labour Party of backing the communist riots, the socialists replied that the plunderings were encouraged by the Government itself, accompanied by the mental reservation that the masses should be allowed to rob and steal, because then they would not have any object in making a revolution.

In the meantime the unknown horror of the elections drew nearer, when the socialists and communists reckoned upon obtaining an absolute majority. The communists started the election agitations with two slogans: the complete destruction of the militarist parties, and complete solidarity with the Russian Soviet Republics.

The Condottiere no longer mistook the meaning of the events in Fiume. He turned with whole-hearted reverence towards the poet, who, instead of long and tiring political conflicts, had tried, by a single *coup*, to restore the national consciousness—the source of all progress and development. The Condottiere honoured the Commandant of Fiume, who considered it the most important task to overthrow the present cowardly and irresolute Government, because if this were once done all internal disquietude and uncertainty would automatically cease. Mussolini had the same ideas, but within him the sense of reality was much stronger. He recognized that the strangling danger of communism was momentarily the most threatening. He already saw clearly the significance of the Fiume revolution, which had at the first moment enraptured him too.

The piercing force of his mind, which always drove to the depths of everything, his wonderful discriminative faculty, which could absorb from the most various theories and happenings what he judged to be just and actual, now, in these critical days of his life, seethed up like a

boiling geyser. As he had accepted and reformed the organizing power of socialism; as he had tried to reinvigorate, by the infusion of nationalistic ideals, the dead, dry syndicalism of Sorel; as he had revived the teaching of Nietzsche, who proclaimed the dominion of eminent personalities instead of the dominion of the masses—so did he now absorb and deal with the phenomena of this strange Fiume affair. The first thing which had struck him in Fiume was the lashing up of the national consciousness, which burnt as deeply in his soul as in the poet's—with this difference, that it was the poet who had been the first to seize the sword. The other idea, which, by its gigantic conception, had captivated his imagination, was the restoration of the Ancient Roman military organization—the revival of the legions. To-day only a few of such organizations strolled about the blocked-up harbour, but if he were able to build up this organization all over Italy, then no power could stand against it.

The situation was a difficult and dangerous one. Besides the Government, which made every effort to suppress his political endeavours, and the communists, who hated him, and whose power was daily increasing, he had also to fear the movement at Fiume, for he could not know when it might not grow over his head. He felt that, at this moment, nothing was more important for him than to pursue his agitation with incredible energy. He would catch the peasant by saying that the land was his, he would conquer the workman by syndicalism, he would hold the unemployed by proclaiming further the necessity for a strong Government which could give them work, and, above all, he would melt these masses into the iron organization of the legions into a powerful military structure which would have to be so strong that, however events might turn out, nobody would ever dare to move without it.

His friends received him with stormy enthusiasm when they heard of his new plans. His slogan was "The greatest adversary of the Fascio is the Liberal democratic State, but at this moment the first and greatest task is to overcome communism."

On the 9th of October Mussolini was present at a great meeting of the Fasci in Florence. The communists felt the

force of the new organization, and they did not dare to trouble the meeting. But they aimed at the leader, and while Mussolini was quietly taking his dinner on the terrace of a restaurant the hint of a waiter made him observe that several doubtful figures were lurking round the place. In their buttonholes shone red carnations, their number was constantly growing, and their hands were fiercely clenched as they glanced at him.

The man, who saw this hatred storming up at him, silently took his imposing revolver from his pocket, put it on the table near him, and quietly went on with his dinner.

The crowd dispersed, murmuring:

—Well, well. After the election he will no more play the hero. Indeed, we shall have time to kill him when we have got the power into our hands. But then there will be no mercy for you, Signor Mussolini. . . .

The Condottiere did not reply. A sheet of white paper was before him, and on it stood the following names:

1. Mussolini, the founder of Fascism;
2. Marinetti, the leader of Futurism;
3. Podrecca, the head of the anti-clerical movement;
4. Toscanini, the famous musical director;
5. Bolchon, the Futurist author;
6. Macchi, the air-pilot.

Then some unknown names: republicans, syndicalists, and at the end a few anarchists. This strange list of names, this bizarre mixture of theories and principles and of their respective adherents, was the first election register of the Fascism. The Condottiere smiled. The election would not be so very easy, for his army would also appear before the ballot-boxes.

But a few weeks later the smile froze on his face. The elections were on the 20th of November, and his Party had completely failed. Instead, one hundred and sixty representatives of the socialists and communists, an overwhelming majority of the Left, made its way into the House. After the general strikes and riots the red banner now appeared also in Parliament.

After this great victory the communist leaders considered the situation ripe enough to proclaim an open

revolt embracing the whole country. The danger was terrifying. *Cannibal ante Portas.*

And then, on the 29th of November, on the Cathedral Square of Milan, the first bomb exploded among the people who were rioting under the red banner. At the first moment the crowd was petrified, but in the next it knew whence the attack had come. It remembered the 21st of March, when the shabby, worn-out, camp-green uniform, that spectre from the battle-fields, had first torn to pieces the red banner floating over the Piazza Mercanti.

And amidst the explosion of this first hand-grenade, amidst the lamentation of the wounded, from all these lips, distorted by rage, one protracted cry arose:

"Death to Mussolini."

And where was Mussolini? Sitting in his editorial room and turning over the manuscript of his recently finished drama. Concise words, suffocating scenes, and acts strained to breaking-point in the immense tension of the tragedy.

He turned over the pages, meditated for a little while, and then suddenly wrote the title on the first page:

"*It begins, Gentlemen!*"

CHAPTER VIII

"BELLUM CIVILE"

MUSSOLINI had scarcely time to look around him, so urgently did events compel him to take swift action. He did not despair on account of his failure at the election. He was the pupil of Sorel and Machiavelli, and thus, according to his conviction, the man ambitious for power must attain it, not by parliamentary methods, but by force of arms. He had contested the elections rather at the instigation of his friends, and now, after its unsuccessful issue, the conviction strengthened in him that his end could be attained only by revolutionary means. All his time and all his thoughts belonged to the organization of the Fasci and of the legions.

But very little time stood at his disposal. In the first months of 1920 a wave of strikes swept over Italy. The one hundred and sixty socialist and communist members of Parliament made all business impossible, while they pursued, with unprecedented insolence, their campaign of disturbance in the country. The People's Party—of which Don Sturzo, the brilliant priest, a Spaniard by origin though born in Sicily, was the leader—found it hard to keep pace with the socialists and communists in promises. It was just the same with the other parties of the Left. These believed, with Don Sturzo, that they could only keep their popularity by competing in promises with the extreme socialists. During this great auction of lies, one strike followed another. A strike of the postmen, a general strike of the railwaymen, which could only be settled by the Government raising wages. The anarchist leader, Malatesta, who collaborated with the communists, was arrested, but because of the threatening attitude of the masses the Government found itself obliged to release him. The Cabinet of Nitti failed, but, as there was nothing better to succeed it, was re-formed. Some days after, on the 18th of January, the iron-workers of Liguria started a strike, and forcibly removed the managing staffs from the factories, communizing the working plant. One week after the same thing happened in Naples. The Cabinet of Nitti organized the Royal Guards, in order to strengthen

the police, and on the 29th of February the former had a conflict with the communists at Milan. Nobody trusted the troops. The officers were again insulted in the streets. On the 7th of March there was a general strike, with dead and wounded. The bourgeoisie behaved in a cowardly and undisciplined way. The Government was not energetic enough, and the communists were incredibly insolent. Everybody had lost faith and hope. The shadow of a proletarian dictatorship already loomed over the land.

"I am not on the side of the pessimists," proclaimed the Editor-in-Chief of the *Popolo d'Italia*; "I have still an unshaken confidence in the future of the Italian nation. If I took a different view, I should immediately retire into private life."

That was the only encouraging utterance made throughout Italy. The one who expressed it knew very well that behind him the legions were already ranging.

The People's Party also provoked a great strike by its trade unions, organized as were those of the socialists. Fifty thousand textile workers left the factories at a signal from Don Sturzo, who did not want to lag behind the socialists either in promising or in revolutionizing.

"What Don Sturzo actually does," rapped out the Condottiere, "is by no means a catholic policy, but black Bolshevism, which has the same destroying and anti-social character as the other—the red Bolshevism."

On the 24th of March, in one of the greatest factories of Milan, the workmen, following the Ligurian example, turned out the managing staff and took into their hands the direction of the working plant. This constituted pure communism. The workmen of the State undertakings started striking also, and the conflicts between the police and the communists were repeated.

In April a serious conflict in Bologna was followed by a strike of four days. There was a general strike in Venice, a demonstration in Rome for the Soviet Republics, again leading to conflict.

On the 1st of May all work stopped throughout the whole country, and the communist masses poured down the streets like a vast flood. The busts of Lenin and Trotsky were carried at the head of the processions, and red banners waved over the houses of the trade unions.

But the army standing behind the Condottiere was ever growing in the dark. And Mussolini flashed out thus in the *Popolo d'Italia*:

"No, we shall not yield. To violence there is but one reply—violence, and we shall give this reply without hesitation. We do not fight against the nation, because the nation and these stupid communistic agitators are not one and the same. The nation consists of those who carried on the war. We have but one duty and no other: to understand the social evils which have revealed themselves after the war, and to defeat the demagogues, who are alluring the people by false and unrealizable ideals."

His army followed him blindly, but to the others, intoxicated by the red folly, he spoke in vain. At Livorno and at Rome the strike broke out again, while in the Parliament Don Sturzo overthrew the Cabinet of Nitti.

Bonomi tried to form a new one, but his attempt came to nothing and Nitti returned again to power.

In Carni the revolution broke out and a Soviet Republic was formed. Friaul joined the strikers.

The Fasci were not yet strong enough, but this bold and resolute army of blackshirts could no longer be stopped. They had begun their campaign throughout the whole country. Bombs were flying, guns were thundering, at first without any central direction, but merely according to the sudden orders of the single divisional leaders.

The Condottiere was not pleased with this state of things.

"Repression," he said, "must always have the character of righteous reprisal. I am far from wanting to make a system of violence. Force must be noble, chivalrous, and have a healing effect. Do not strive at petty, dispersed, and aimless violence, but only at the magnificent and invincible violence of the decisive hour."

He was but at the beginning of the conflict, and already he was educating the masses. What a difference there was between him and the communistic agitators, who only lashed the furious passions of the mob, rushing with them to extremes.

But for the moment it was the communistic agitators

who were bathed in glory—not he. The lira was constantly falling, and the Exchange kept carrying on its wild speculations. On account of the increasing strikes, a complete bankruptcy of production threatened, and the merchants changed the prices of their articles almost from day to day. The Government had to raise the price of bread because of the general increase of prices, but owing to the pressure of the socialists it found itself obliged to revoke this order. Nitti failed again, more definitely, and old Giolitti, one of the most brilliant tacticians of Parliament, succeeded him. Bonomi became War Minister, and Sforza Foreign Minister.

What good did they do?

In Brescia, Cremona, Milan, and Naples there were fresh strikes, and conflicts between the police and the communists became more frequent. The communists flung bombs into the Milan restaurant Cova, and in Ancona the anarchists incited a regiment of soldiers to cannonade the barracks. In Rome a strike broke out among the tramway employés, upon which the inhabitants of the capital lost patience—mainly under the influence of the Fascistic agitation—and destroyed the premises of the *Avanti*. In reply to this there was a general strike. Everybody expected that the new Government would at last establish order, either by arresting the greatest demagogues among the communistic leaders and agitators, or by shooting them down. There was no time for hesitation, no time for indulgence. A large number of factories were already socialized, and if things were to go on like this, then either to-day or to-morrow communism would break out all over Italy. . . .

But Giolitti, the old Parliamentary fox, had other ideas: . . . I do not in the least intend to break down the communists by arms. In the first place, I have not enough arms; the number of the police and of the Royal Guard is not sufficient, and I cannot trust the troops. The armed force I can dispose of is just enough to defend the public buildings. Secondly, an armed opposition is quite superfluous. Let them shout, let them agitate, let them socialize. Let them knock their heads against the iron laws of economic life. *Laisser passer, laisser faire* . . . They will soon go out of fashion. . . .

Thus old Giolitti spoke to his friends, and thus he argued with himself, but meanwhile he took care that the Fascists (who had been treated by the previous Governments as dangerous elements, like the communists) should not be persecuted. In the future, thought the old tactician, his own force not being sufficient to face the communists, the conflict should be left to the Fascists. The two parties should scuffle with each other, and when the whole country was tired of the quarrel, then he would put both into his pocket.

In July the communists saw that the new Government was not even as energetic as the previous one, and thus their agitation was carried on in a still more menacing fashion. Around Bologna they incited the peasants to such an extent that the land workers began to strike. In Lombardía they socialized almost every factory, and the Government did not defend the owners. The managing directors of the factories were desperate but helpless. Red Guards were formed, and swelled into a dangerous force armed with weapons stolen or bought from the military stores. In more than ten towns of North Italy revolutionary courts were formed, which had already, in the face of a terrified public, begun to pronounce death sentences.

There was nowhere any opposition, save from a few Fascist troops. They flung their grenades, sent some of their adversaries to death, and spoke thus:

"We also proclaim that the social organization of the world must be re-formed, but we shall prevent the country from jumping blindfolded into the bottomless pit. The communists must learn that they can only advance over our dead bodies, and till they have broken down our opposition all their hope is in vain."

The communist leaders laughed at this. They thought themselves much too strong to fear a few Fascist attacks. It seemed to be only a question of weeks or months before they could get into power and be able to communize all the means of production.

Giolitti did nothing. His only creation was the so-called compensating committee, which allowed the workers' councils to interfere with the managing staffs. The manufacturers were in despair. The law was voted, and the workers' councils overflowed the factories.

The Condottiere was enraged:

"We must consume liberalism and democracy, these acquisitions of 1789, like a dish of macaroni. They can no longer keep their ground in the stream of modern times. The future belongs to us, who proclaim that the chosen few must govern Italy; to us, who by our violent opposition prevent the same catastrophe as fell upon unfortunate Hungary from destroying our country."

In the banks and factories the financial potentates, formerly so powerful and now so desperate, began to listen:

—This is indeed our man. Excellent. While the Government is giving an absolutely free hand to the communists he proclaims resistance.

—This man keeps on saying that the socialists and communists must be broken down by every means, and he has really shown that he has enough faith and energy to fight them. He deserves indeed every possible support.

The man in question listened smiling to the praise of the financiers, whilst he studied the new plan of the Constitution which D'Annunzio had given to Fiume. The poet—whose enterprise was now completely isolated—had established a sort of new social organization in the Bay of Quarnero. There was no parliamentarism and there was no secret ballot. People were divided into different groups according to their professions, and the new State was governed by the advice of these corporations, or rather by the representatives of various interests. The only thing which gave the right to a livelihood was work.

People said with a wink: "Has D'Annunzio become a Bolshevik?"

D'Annunzio laughed. He said that his form of State was something of a Latinized, national Bolshevism. And the Condottiere said nothing, but he put the Constitution into his table-drawer. Five years after, when about to establish the Ministry of Trade Unions, he made use of this curious scheme.

He rushed through the whole of Italy in a motor-car. To-day here, to-morrow there. He himself drove his huge racing-car, and this gigantic grey monster whizzed through the Peninsula at a speed of 120 kilometres an hour. The

guests on the back seats shivered with terror, for the driver took the curves at the giddiest pace without putting on the brakes.

"Humanity is progressing towards a swiftly moving age, and woe to those who fear to take part in the frightful rush. The reign of the cowardly and the timid will end in an hour."

His power of attraction for the masses went on increasing. The bourgeoisie, the artisans, the merchants, all saw in him the deliverer, the *strong hand*. He began also to bring over to him the agricultural labourers. The peasant feared the communists would take his land, and Mussolini did not hesitate for a moment to make use of this fear on behalf of the Fascio.

The workmen had enough common sense to see that the labour councils, which had taken possession of the management of the factories, could not ensure them a better livelihood; and thus they began to wonder whether they were pursuing the right way.

The Fascist Trade Unions, having the elasticity of national syndicalism, grew gradually stronger in the general confusion.

Yet this was but the beginning of beginnings. Before the great masses of Labour there still stood the Northern Idol: Bolshevism, with its gigantic and fearful proportions. The imposing greatness and apocalyptic gloom of this system and of its theories and principles could not be counterpoised by the shallow and worn-out teachings of Democracy and Liberalism.

"What are the socialists doing with us? Four Arabs get into a fuss in Libya; the sequel to it runs: 'Italians clear out of Libya.' Six thousand Albanians revolt; the reply is: 'Italians clear out of Valona.' And if to-morrow Dalmatia were to be assaulted by the Yugoslavs, the socialists would demand: 'Clear out of Dalmatia.' And if the day after to-morrow insurgents were to march against Trieste, the slogan would again be: 'Clear out of Trieste.'"

"But there are still a few of us in Italy who are proud to remember that we are Italians whose slogan is: Rome will rise again, and Rome will judge."

That instinctive talent which had discovered the actively

working force in socialism before the war, in the youth of Italy during the war, and in the ex-service men after the war, which had observed the sharp outlines of a geometrical shape in what for others was chaos, that instinctive talent now began to bear fruit, now that the nation had become maddened by the monumental character and terror of Bolshevism.

Do you want a greatness that impresses the mind?

Well, this man will show you a greatness beside which Bolshevism fades into grey mediocrity.

Do you admire the Kremlin?

Well, this man will show you the Capitol.

You are in love with Moscow?

Well, you shall see Rome, with its overwhelming magnificence.

Is it Lenin whom you long for?

Well, Caesar will rise on the scene, and his brilliant and glorious figure will overshadow the far-off silhouette of the Tsar of the Reds.

It was in vain for the sly foxes of the Parliament to say that these thoughts were pure phantasies. Mussolini knew how to produce the antidote to Bolshevism by these conceptions.

The man who had once been inoculated with them was for ever immune from the Eastern plague. For which was the greater—Caesar or Lenin, the Roman eagle or the red banner?

† The Condottiere reviewed his army. All the fighters already wore the black shirt, the legions had adapted the war uniform of the Arditi. Instead of the huge red banners tiny crossed Roman flags fluttered at the head of his troops. On these tiny flags the four proud letters shone: S.P.Q.R.—and above them, in a laurel wreath, with widespread wings, stood the eagle, the proud bird of the Caesars. The army consisted of about twenty or thirty thousand men. Their equipment? One had a rifle, another a hand-grenade, a third only a rubber stick. Till now the army had only measured its force in a few insignificant brawls. The leader did not allow it to go into a decisive conflict because he did not consider the situation sufficiently ripe. This man, with his indomitable temperament, had the nerve to wait quietly till he should receive the

impulse to start from the general enthusiasm flaming up around him. He could hold out till his hour should strike.

But what till then? What was he to do with these armed forces which the fierce, impatient temperament of youth was heating up to boiling-point—ready to explode? He knew his race, he knew how to excite it and how to rein it in. To-day he taught his men the greeting *à la D'Annunzio*, he shouted three times the word by which the Bishops of the Middle Ages had sent into battle the Christian knights: *Eja . . . Eja . . . Eja . . .* and the masses yelled back to it simultaneously, and with one voice, the cry of joy of the Ancient Greeks: "Alala!" The next day he forbade them to shake hands, showing how, with their right arm raised, the Ancient Romans had greeted each other. On the third day he ordered that the war-hymn of the *Arditi*—the *Giovinezza*—should be also the national air of the Fascio. For every day he invented something new, something which was bold and exciting, just as, when an editor, he had urged on his collaborators to work by giving them always fresh themes, fresh topics, and fresh thoughts. He stopped before the legions, and asked a proud question—the military march of future times:

"A chi è Italia?"

And the reply was roared back to him:

"A noi!"

In Bologna, in the centre of communism, the leaders—who thought that by their victory at the elections, by their socializing of the factories, and by their majority in the municipal councils they would get into complete power during the winter—these very leaders now began to take seriously the rapidly growing force of the Fasci. They had believed that the men of Mussolini would soon be exhausted by what they had hitherto been doing: engaging in insignificant street quarrels, flinging a few bombs, and firing off some muskets. They fancied that the Fasci were not able to carry out greater, more decided, and more united actions; but when they actually saw in the streets the long files of blackshirts marching under the Roman eagles, when they noticed how the personality of the leader attracted the simple working men, they began to concentrate all their force against Fascism, instead of

against the constantly weakening Government. There was no longer anything to fear from the weak Government; Fascism had now become the dangerous enemy, which had to be terrorized, hunted down, and extinguished.

The communists had not been brought up in a school where they had been taught to wait or to choose their means. In November 1920 the communists of Bologna decided that, after the election of town councillors on the 24th, they would form the Italian Soviet Republic with Bologna as its capital.

What were the obstacles? The Nationalist and Fascist opposition of the Bolognese town council. On the 24th of November this obstacle ceased to exist; during the afternoon session the Fascist and Nationalist members of the municipal council were killed in the most brutal way.

Something flashed up in the eyes of the Condottiere. The psychological moment had arrived. From the house of the *Popolo d'Italia* one command was wired to all parts of the country:

“Revenge!”

The decisive fight had begun. In Ferrara the Red Guard came into collision with the Fascists. There were four dead and thirty wounded. It did not matter. Go on. Motor-cars rushed in all directions in the night—on them tiny guerilla troops of blackshirts. The premises of the Trade Unions were in flames, the huge rotating machines of the socialist Press were smashed to splinters by the bombs and hand-grenades.

“A chi è Italia?”—“A noi!”

What did the Government do? “Laisser passer, laisser faire,” said old Giolitti quietly, allowing them to quarrel with each other. He was occupied with something else. He made use of the general confusion to bring about an arrangement on the Fiume question. The Foreign Minister, Sforza, concluded the Agreement of Rapallo, according to which D’Annunzio was to leave the harbour of Fiume. In the general chaos of December, while the Peninsula was struggling with its internal warfare, General Caviglia assaulted Fiume with a regular Italian army. Italians attacked Italians, and on Christmas eve the blood of forty dead stained the basalt pavement of the harbour. The regular troops triumphed, and the poet, with wounded

head and with a bitter sigh in his heart, left the town for which he had taken sword in hand.

"Receive me, ancient Italy, receive me, your old son, whose only crime has been to believe in the resurrection of your glory."

Public opinion took alarm. For a moment everybody forgot internal conflicts and civil war, while the Fiume question rose again in the foreground. The socialist and democratic papers laughed at the failure of the adventure. Papini, the well-known Italian poet, naturally bellowed that D'Annunzio ought to have died beneath the ruins of Fiume, and one part of the Nationalists turned against Mussolini, accusing him of having abandoned the cause of Fiume, when instead he ought to have started a revolution in its favour. The Condottiere replied:

"Some people reproach me for not having brought about that easy, pleasant, and dainty little thing which is called a revolution. You will only be able to bring about a revolution when this revolution has its own clearly defined ideals, for the masses cannot be led into battle save for definite aims. The revolution must have a fixed goal, and its programme has to be worked out to the smallest detail. This programme must remain independent of all the internal troubles of the country, and must take into account the fact that victory may not come till to-morrow. A revolution is not a momentary effervescence; a revolution is a deadly serious thing. It must be brought about by co-operating with the Army, not by going against it; by using arms, not attempting to do without them; by organized troops, not by people gathered together in public meetings. The revolution will only succeed if backed by the great mass of public opinion; it will fail irretrievably if this is wanting.

"D'Annunzio and his legionaries, who failed, and fell while fighting, are the glory of Italy. D'Annunzio is the only man who, by one manly act, has reined in the force of the entire world for a whole year. But Giolitti also displayed stubbornness by not going back upon contracts and agreements which were to him not simply scraps of paper to be torn to pieces. The Christmas of Fiume was a fatal tragedy, the dramatic conflict of State interests with ideal interests, of our pusillanimity and our greatness."

There was nobody who saw more clearly what had happened in Fiume. He saw the fall of the tragic hero of New Italy—the poet who had first shown the way, but who had to fail by the logic of events. The poet had fought for a thought which had not yet been matured by time. It was a pure impossibility to create the greatness and independence of Italy from a blockaded town whilst everywhere in the country the most fierce international demagogues raged unpunished.

At Modena the communists killed Mario Ruini, the young legionary of Fiume, who, after the long conflict, had just come back to his people. A mute procession followed the funeral, and the coffin was surrounded by black-shirted Fascists. Suddenly a shower of artillery fire swept over the silent funeral procession; the communists, hidden on both sides of the streets, in the windows and in the garrets, had fired off their rifles. People fell screaming, and the Fascists, forming a square, defended themselves, and fell on the street paving, overborne by their brutal adversaries. After this opening of the year 1921, Ferrero, the famous Italian historian, said openly in one of the greatest newspapers, that, according to his opinion, the complete victory of the Bolsheviks was now already inevitable.

The Condottiere, on the other hand, *wrote* nothing, but he made history. He prophesied nothing, but from the *Popolo d'Italia* the battle-cry now rang forth with devastating force:

“Revenge! Henceforth the Fascio will know but one law—the law of the desert.”

Mussolini opened all the sluices, and his bold army, resolved to face everything, now swept over the Peninsula with the swiftness of an inundation. There was no mercy, there was no pardon. The communists, the socialists, and the members of the People's Party were equally their adversaries. Bombs flew right into the barracks of the Red Guards and into the midst of the processions of the People's Party. The civil war raged with full force. During the first three months of the year 1921 Italy had not a single tranquil day. Barricades were raised in the streets, the firearms crackled along them, and the red-hot splinters

of the bombs spread death in a thousand directions. The number of those who fell under the sign of the Roman eagles amounted to thousands, but from every corner of the Peninsula the youth of Italy now rolled in one irresistible flood into the ranks of the legions. Did we say there were thousands of dead? There was not one. When ranging the troops, the names of the dead were called, just like the names of the living. For the living, only one voice said: "Present." But if the commandant pronounced the name of the dead, then thousands of hands were raised simultaneously, and from thousands of throats burst forth the cry:

—Here . . . Here . . . Here . . .

The communist leaders, who thought that by their fierce and constant strikes, by their occupation of the factories and by their intrusion on the Parliament, they already ruled Italy, now saw with terror that they were losing ground from day to day.

—Strikes? A Fascist troop had appeared, not brought up in the Marxist school, but taught in the trenches what force and decision mean. Hand-grenades were flying and bombs exploding. Demonstrations? Already they had blown their trumpets, their artillery fire had flashed out, and the cry had risen: "A noi!" Speeches? Agitations? The theoretical glorification of Bolshevism? Why! Instead of bullets, half a litre of castor-oil was administered for this. The man who received it did not deliver a speech for two weeks.

The hard-pressed communists felt now that, in open conflict, they had come off second-best, but they did not yet submit. On the contrary. In Empoli a little troop of marines, sent by the Government to Florence in order to break down the railway strike, was slaughtered without mercy by the communists, who greatly outnumbered them. In the Milanese Cova restaurant bombs were flung into the ranks of peaceful citizens, and in the middle of March the same attempt was repeated in the Diana Theatre. In the crowded auditorium, during the breathless silence of the performance, suddenly an infernal machine exploded, and this frightful night of terror was shadowed by the tragedy of twenty innocent dead and unnumbered wounded. The reply came without delay:

—“These briganti, who stick at nothing, must know,” proclaimed the Condottiere, “that their last hour has struck. They must learn that Italy, which sacrificed five hundred thousand men for victory, can sacrifice five thousand more, finally to settle accounts with the communists.”

The dead massacred in the Diana Theatre were taken to burial from the Cathedral Square of Milan. Twenty coffins stood side by side, and around them in serried ranks the legions under the eagles. People who, for fear of the communists, had not dared to peep from their houses, now, at sight of the huge black army, began to feel themselves safe.

Young and old, men and women, even children wandered in enormous crowds of thousands upon thousands towards the Cathedral Square, in order to accompany the dead on their last journey, with a living and vivid protest. At the head of the legions there stood, in a black shirt, with an ash-grey face and rigidly set features—the Leader. He looked up towards the Cathedral door.

The ceremony was performed by the Archbishop of Milan, Achilles Ratti. He had a sympathetic face and wore eye-glasses.

The Condottiere bent his head, while the Archbishop gave his blessing to the mourning crowds. Mussolini did not then know that this very priest, who consecrated the dead, would one day occupy the throne of St. Peter, under the name of Pius XI.

After the funeral the legions passed through the streets in serried ranks. This sad episode of the conflict being past, they continued the civil war with increased vigour. Punitive expeditions swept through the chief centres of communism—the North Italian manufacturing towns, such as Bologna, Milan, Florence, Genoa, Parma, Modena. The Fascist legions—the kernel of which was formed by the Arditi—worked, as they had been trained to do in the war, for the service of the attacking columns. As on the battle-field, these daring little troops had intruded into the enemy trenches, so now did they extirpate, step by step, the centres of communism. They worked with bombs, daggers, bayonets, hand-grenades, and rifles.

The premises of the Labour Chambers, Trade Unions,

and Socialist Clubs were set on fire one after the other, while the representatives of socialism and communism were thrown out of the managing staffs of the factories by force of arms. In this blazing paroxysm of force, enthusiasm, cruelty, and steadfast will, there were no masses through which they would not have rushed, and there was no force which could have stood against them.

Over the fiercest of the fight there rose the strains of the triumphant *Giovinezza*, and through blood and smoke, through the cries of the wounded and the howls of the deserted communist leaders, the new *Credo* swelled to one overwhelming roar.

—A chi è Italia?

—A noi!

At the end of March, Turati, one of the socialist leaders, demanded in the Parliament that the penal law should be altered because there was no other mode of defence against the Fascists.

The idol had collapsed. Those who, but half a year ago, had been absolute masters of the situation, were now imploring help from that very Government which, but a short while before, they had tried to strangle.

It seemed that the civil war had finally come to an end.

CHAPTER IX

THREE MEN—THREE OPINIONS

AT Moscow, in the Red Hall of the Kremlin, the Italian Chargé d'Affaires reported to the deeply disappointed Trotsky that, in Italy, Communism had met with a complete defeat.

Trotsky looked up:

"Mussolini?"

"Yes," was the reply. "It is his force which has given the finishing stroke."

Trotsky did not utter a single word. He thought of the Italian socialists, and suppressed rage hammered in his heart.

"Beasts," he murmured between his teeth. "They have driven away the only real revolutionist."

In the South bonfires flared. In the *Popolo d'Italia* the Fascists exulted thus:

"This is the end of the disgraceful comedy, the end of the tragic ballet. The furious Bacchanal of traitors, scoundrels, malefactors, and cowards, who have now for two long years been trampling on and insulting the heroes and fighters who faced the enemy, and committed no other crime than that of having now faced the mob—this furious Bacchanal is over at last.

"Its leaders return to-day to their obscure caverns. We have defeated and dispersed them, and their yellow faces have vanished once more.

"And the youth marching under the Roman eagles, what is it but the eternal, inexhaustible force of the Fatherland, a force which Fate in this critical hour has brought into the world to secure to us a glorious future? *Italy is saved. The terror of revolution has passed away like a dreadful nightmare.*"

Thus spoke Mussolini. Whilst in Rome, old Giolitti, that brilliant and cunning statesman, made a proud and satisfied report to the King:

—“Your Majesty, the policy of the Government has completely triumphed. We have made Fascism deal with Communism, and as every action of the Fascists consists in fighting, by this negative programme they will, after a short time, lose their popularity. At all events we shall bring them into Parliament to pacify their boiling passions and impulses. The public opinion of the country is no longer desirous of fighting but of peace. So the time will come when, after having broken down the extremists of the Left, we may clear away the extremists of the Right.”

Thus spoke Giolitti, the old fox of Parliament, rubbing his hands in great satisfaction.

CHAPTER X

THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND FACETS

THE *Popolo d'Italia* had removed from its former small offices to more spacious and distinguished premises on the Via Lovanio. Instead of the old, untidy, dusty offices, filled with bombs, rifles, long-haired Titans, and other young giants, one might now find stylishly furnished rooms, and, what was more important, presses belonging to the newspaper itself. But the hand-grenades were still concealed amidst the pictures and the carved furniture, and in the cupboards the lexicons and handbooks got on very well with the bayonets hidden there. The room of the Editor-in-Chief was already embellished with Persian carpets, but in the doorway, instead of a uniformed porter, with a heavy, pointed moustache, an armed legionary stood guard.

The newspaper had become a power, but the Editor-in-Chief remained the same straight and ruthless fighter he had always been. Innovations? Behind his writing-table a comfortable arm-chair had been put by his collaborators, who thought that this would better suit the powerful Editor-in-Chief than the old, simple wooden chair.

—“An arm-chair? What? You have brought an arm-chair into my room? Take it away at once or I will throw it out of the window. An arm-chair and a pair of slippers mean that a man is on the down grade.” Thus he grumbled at his frightened collaborators, who bundled away the dangerous furniture. The Condottiere looked smilingly after these boys of his. The realization of those plans which were goading his imagination could hardly be directed from an arm-chair. No!

The article of Wilfredo Pareto was before him. What had his old adored professor written of him and of his creation, Fascism?

“What is to become of the Fascismus” (wrote Pareto), “this one cannot yet actually foretell. To-day it has not yet precise and powerful ideals, and it has not a positive programme for the solution of the social

problems. Perhaps it will succeed in working out such a vast and comprehensive programme, and then it may develop into a most important party—or perhaps not; and in the latter case, after having exhausted itself in breaking down socialism, it will have a short life."

Giolitti judged the situation correctly when, after having suppressed communism, he concentrated his political powers upon discrediting Fascism. Pareto, the brilliant old professor, judged the situation still more correctly when he indicated that the danger of Fascismus lay in its purely negative programme. But the Condottiere had judged it best of all, and he did not in the least intend to discredit his powerful political army in the eyes of the public. Especially not now, when he could see that events had justified him.

According to his ideas, Bolshevism was not a cause, but only an effect, the direct consequence of the Parliamentary and political decline of the Liberal democratic State, and of the dangerous hypertrophy of capitalism. He did not oppose the Bolsheviks in order to defend the old liberal régime, but to prevent a stupid and destructive economic theory, a barbarous and entirely Asiatic system, completely foreign to the Italian spirit, from getting into power. He did not struggle against the Bolsheviks because they wanted to overthrow the Liberal democratic State, but because they wished to establish, in its place, a type of organization opposed, not only to his own ideal, but to the mentality of the Latin race and every demand of common sense.

Directly the danger of communism was over, Mussolini cared no longer about it. It was an adversary not worth wasting a grain of gunpowder upon. The direction of the conflict had now again become the old one—against the Liberal State. Mussolini lived in Milan, in the world of factories, machines, and realities, and as he knew well that a single bank-manœuvre was able, in an hour, to change the whole economic life of the country, he could never understand what sense there was in Parliament ruminating over the acceptance of one Bill for months and months? He saw how the speedy progress of technical

science demanded a State organization quickly adapting itself to every new circumstance, a State organization able to keep pace with events, for to stop, but for a moment, would mean its end.

The world had to face the dawn of the machine age, and in this frightful nerve-shattering struggle, where even hours had their importance, it was no use to let a single working day be lost for the sake of liberty, equality, and fraternity or any other illusion. In this struggle it was not to be tolerated that, instead of those predestined to leadership, the uncultured masses should rule over Italy, with a Parliamentary system unfit for quick decisions or an immediate perception of events.

"Fascism was not only born of my mind and of my heart, but also of the deep and eternal necessity of the Mediterranean race. Fascism is a living force which has swept a Bolshevik State from the horizon, and now considers that the time has come finally to settle accounts with the Liberal State, which still remains.

"Our ideal is the complete and absolute negation of the Liberalism of 1789. The world is proceeding towards the age of the machine, and in this age, instead of the reign of the masses, there must come the reign of the chosen few."

He saw before him the new direction of the conflict, and he did not hesitate for a moment in taking it.

Did Giolitti want his army to be turned into a political party, like the others, which could be wire-pulled by the Parliamentary tacticians?

He thought of the legions, and smiled at this pious presumption. Did Giolitti want him to take part in the elections? Very well. The majority of public opinion favoured him already, and thus he could really offer this small service to Giolitti.

The elections ended with a strange result. Thirty-four "blackshirt" representatives came into Parliament, and everybody expected this courageous, resolute little troop, which knew no half-solutions and no concessions, to be strong enough to hold its ground. At all events they were good enough—thought old Giolitti—to conclude a pact

with, if the socialists should prove threatening; on the other hand, he might conclude a pact with the Left, if the Fascists were to oppose him.

But what did the Condottiere think of it? He had now thirty-four of his men in Parliament. There was no need for more, as the number of socialists was greatly reduced. But something else was needed. The public longed for peace. The Fascio had been all right so long as the communist danger was actually threatening, but now? . . . Italy had been completely exhausted by those battles, which since the spring of 1915 had raged almost without any intermission. She had had enough of wars, hand-grenades, communistic terror troops, and Fascist detachments. What did the people want? To work in order to live, and tranquillity in which to establish a new life. Peace, only peace, was what they needed.

The speculations of Giolitti had hit upon it. The old, expert politician knew exactly the changing mood of the public. He smiled and looked with ironical pity towards Milan. A short half-year—he made a deprecatory movement—and the rebellious leader of the Fasci, this skilful demagogue, would be out of date.

But the other man, too, saw clearly the danger, and instead of petty Parliamentary tactics, he began to form a plan, bold and brilliant, which, by its great genius, amazed even his most intimate friends.

In August 1921 Mussolini entered unexpectedly into a truce with the socialists.

Giolitti was taken aback by this news. And people looked at each other.

Mussolini to make peace with the socialists? What could it mean?

The Editor-in-Chief of the *Popolo d'Italia* knew what he was about. The following facts were clear to him:

1. If it was he who came to an agreement with the socialists, then peace would indeed be secured, because they would not dare to overthrow an agreement contracted with him.

2. It would be *he* who brought the peace so longed for by the whole country, and not—Giolitti; thus in the eye of the public he would greatly increase the reputation of the Fascio, whilst further discrediting the Government.

3. He could dissipate the public fear that Fascismus meant only riots.

4. He would gain time to reorganize his party.

5. He would be able to make use of the broken-down Labour Party for his own ends, just where this Party was still strong—in Parliament. A strong, combined opposition would make Giolitti's every movement impossible.

Everything turned out exactly as Mussolini had foreseen. The majority of the nation drew a deep breath. At last! The period of strikes and riots was over, that of work and tranquillity stood on the threshold. And peace would be durable because it was not secured by petty party-pacts, but by the hard fists of Mussolini.

"This poor country is longing for peace, and in order to establish this peace, I would even associate with the devil himself."

On this bold and striking argument Mussolini founded his new policy, bringing round to his side even those sections of the public which feared that a strong Fascism would prevent the tranquillization of the country. The public was not interested in the political possibilities of this affair; that is to say, in the forming of a strong opposition and its Parliamentary consequences. The public saw only that there would no longer be any strikes or riots, and with this assurance, after the sufferings of five bitter years, everybody felt completely satisfied.

Not so the politicians. Giolitti was terrified by this frightful and bizarre alliance, by this destructive union of fire and water.

But even in the camp of Mussolini rebellion arose at this bold step.

The Fascio growled, and in the country organizations protestations against the pact with the socialists went on increasing. Farinacci and the other sub-leaders proclaimed this trick to be immoral and useless.

Whereupon Mussolini, with sudden decision, resigned his leadership, declaring that he was not the man to be wire-pulled. He was the leader, whose business it was to direct. Either they would follow his will, or he would retire—and he retired.

The abdication of the Duce turned the whole situation into one great hurly-burly. Giolitti breathed again. It

seemed that the adventurer would break his neck over this agreement with the socialists. It appeared as if the events of 1914 would be repeated. Then, too, Mussolini stood at the head of a powerful party, and had to resign his post at the zenith of his power. No doubt the comparison was tempting, yet the real situation differed greatly. Mussolini could now quietly resign his leadership, because he knew very well that the blackshirts could not even move without him. When he left the Labour Party this party could develop further untroubled, for it had never drawn its sustenance from his personality, but from the concrete and precise principles of Marxism. But the Fascio had no fixed and rigid dogmas. These effervescing masses, these young men striving for life, without knowing the way to find it, could only be held together—in this babel of promises and catchwords—by his personality and by his power of suggestion. The strength of socialism lies in a dogma, the strength of Fascism in a living man—in Mussolini. Where a perfected system has adhesive power in itself, the individual may be dispensed with, but where the adhesive power is in the individual, there all ballast must be thrown overboard and the will of the one man must be followed.

There was a time when Caius Julius also announced his wish to retire into private life; and there was a time when Bonaparte was struck by the same idea. And what actually happened? Caius Julius became Caesar, and General Bonaparte—Napoleon. Not even a fortnight had passed before the rebellious sub-leaders understood that without Mussolini they could not achieve anything. The Fascio? The masses felt instinctively that without the leader—this unique adhesive power—the Fascio was in danger of annihilation. This overwhelming public opinion thrust once more into the hands of Mussolini the field-marshal's baton.

—Courage and calculation are the best strategy—smiled Mussolini to himself, when he retook the leading position. The bold policy which had made him come to an agreement with the socialists now began to bear fruit. The public considered him the only strong hand, for had not the socialists already capitulated, although he had not yet got into power? Well, what would become of the country then, if he were to take charge of the Government?

So spoke the political prophets more emphatically from day to day.

The ground was giving way beneath the feet of the Government, for, as it had been Mussolini who had made peace with the socialists, this was no longer a possibility for the Prime Minister; and by the former's courageous trick of having regained his leadership on account of this very agreement, he had greatly increased his party's sense of his indispensability. When, after the troubles of a short interregnum, he was again recalled to the head of his army, he returned as a leader endowed with absolute power. Ruthlessly he cleared his party of the uncongenial and doubtful elements, breaking down the high-flown aspirations of the over-ambitious sub-leaders; all his endeavours and efforts now leading towards the last decisive fight, the revolt against the Government.

And what about Giolitti? He was a politician of too much sense and method not to notice the new danger. This Mussolini was a strange, inscrutable creature. You would think him a rebellious demagogue, and then it suddenly comes out that he can calculate more coldly and prudently than the most brilliant business man. And while working with powerful masses of men, and even more powerful thoughts, by an unheard-of method of brutal directness and intricate slyness, he even finds time—horrible dictum—to occupy himself with literature.

Dino Grandi, the young Fascist member of Parliament, to whom, not long ago, he had talked in the lobbies, of course in order to extract something from the inexperienced young man—though his attempt had not been much of a success—had told him a number of strange and interesting things about the Duce. The "Duce"—as the Fascists always call their leader—is a great friend of literature; moreover, he is himself an excellent writer, but he is interested in odd subjects.

One of his plays, *The Lamp without a Light*, is the tragedy of an unfortunate girl. The father does not want the girl to come into the world because he already has another—an illegitimate child—and because he knows that his ruined health would condemn this new life to lasting misery. But the wife's motherly feelings triumph, and the child comes into the world—blind, amidst the curses of its father, its

mother, and its brother. What black thoughts! His other play, *It is Beginning, Gentlemen*, is a still darker, deeper tragedy, with almost a Russian atmosphere. A blind musician is in love with the girl, who leads him about the streets, a girl who is, perhaps, his own child. He loves her, and wants her to be his, but she shrinks from him with horror. In the midst of this frightful struggle the girl confesses that she is in love with a young man, and begs the older man to allow her to go to him; whereupon the blind musician, after a complete moral collapse, kills her. The title of the third play is *Vocazione* (Vocation). It is Christmas night. In a cold cloister cell a young nun kneels before the cradle of the Holy Child and thinks of her own baby, fruit of a forbidden hour, whom she abandoned. The fourth play is as fantastic as a Grand Guignol. On the stage a mad violinist plays wildly and more wildly, ever faster and faster, fiercely and more fiercely, till every string snaps, and then the raging crowd, its lust for dancing still unappeased, tears him to pieces. . . .

Giolitti's eyes flashed. Did not this strange man mean to represent himself? Who could tell? He has also written other works. A novel? *The Fire-Bearers*—a sort of modern Prometheus story. And then another strange novel: *The Battle of the Machines*—no light and cheerful love-story, but the dramatic conflict of three great forces: Intellect, Capital, and Labour—these two antagonists, locked in a deadly struggle which threatens to destroy human society—does he think that these two opponents are to be subjugated by a third powerful and neutral force: the cold domination of intellect? Intellect as a social and political factor? Intellect as the all-embracing governing power? The reign of the select and the talented? What would that be? Utopia, or the renaissance of an enlightened absolutism?

What a strange man! What ponderous thoughts roll through his writings. They say that he has read very much of Nietzsche, and that he too feels himself to be a superman. Dazzlingly many-sided, a regular hero of fiction. He rides like a Centaur, he drives a motor-car so well that he might race at Monza, and not long ago, after falling in his aeroplane and being laid up for some weeks, he went flying again. He fences like an expert fencing-master, and plays a violin as marvellously as a finished artist. Such a

journalist is not born once in a decade—but, if need be, he can pick up the mason's trowel.

A brilliant orator, a masterly talker. Moreover, if to the thousand ramifications of his extraordinary genius are added his perfect play of facial expression and the vigorous elegance of his movements—"H'm", murmured Giolitti to himself—he could become the greatest actor in the world. The ladies, as I hear, are already raving about him.

The old politician shook his head silently. He had been greatly mistaken when he had believed that, after the downfall of communism, he would be able to get this fellow too under his thumb, like the other party leaders. Now he was forced to recognize his error. Firstly, this fellow was right; secondly, he had the command of powerful masses; thirdly, he was such a dare-devil of a genius that there was nobody to equal him. He was a condottiere. Yes, a late incarnation of the fifteenth century, who, instead of the old heavy clanking harness, had armed himself with all the spiritual and technical armour of the twentieth century. A Cesare Borgia, who had the command of machine guns; a Colleoni, who darted ahead with the speed of an aeroplane. He could not possibly compete with this man.

Giolitti was much too clever not to understand this; but he was also much too cunning not to try to conceal his knowledge. Yet in a short time reports leaked out from the circle of the Prime Minister, to the effect that Giolitti considered the victory of the Fascists inevitable.

The Liberal and democratic parties winked. Nitti remarked with fine irony in the lobbies:

"Giolitti is growing too old. To-day he is only eighty, but in three months he may be a hundred."

Giolitti was greatly amused by this witticism. He replied with light sarcasm:

"Nitti is still too young. To-day he is fifty, but in a year he will be only ten."

The third party, who was the cause of this slight difference, decided the matter thus:

"Within the State there are actually two States, two armies, two Governments, two powers. I am the Kemal Pasha of Milan—swift, unchecked, triumphant. Opposing me stands Rome—slack and paralytic, as the eternal Byzantium."

CHAPTER XI

THE INCOMPARABLE LEADER

THE agreement with the socialists did not last for long. It was a casual alliance, necessary, on the one hand, in order that Mussolini might adapt himself to the general longing for peace, and on the other hand that he might continue organizing the country. The moment that he no longer wanted the socialists he threw them off, and pursued his own way alone. Like every great man not blinded by his own triumphs, he also noticed the faults of the Fascist movement, and now that public opinion had facilitated his way to power, he was seized by the sense of responsibility. Under the title *The Hierarchy* he founded a review, which was disseminated by thousands amongst the Fascist organizations.

“Hierarchy means responsibility, duty, and discipline. History records the fate of thousands and thousands of régimes which have arisen, lived, declined, and passed away. Under a new régime one must preserve those qualities of the old which are still capable of development. Upon the old traditions the new shoots must be grafted. Thus you must prepare the way for a new world, thus we may build a bridge between the past and the future.”

Of this review, the coming head of the Government had spoken already. He indicated the programme—responsibility, duty, discipline—in the chaotic confusion of a declining age; he would build up the new State on these three words.

Responsibility, Duty, Discipline. What terribly hard and heavy words, after the enthusiastic slogans of Equality, Fraternity, and Liberty. Was it possible to triumph under such a black banner?

Giolitti resigned, and the same tumult, the same series of intrigues, which had been in full blast before his Government came into power, began again. The great man of the People's Party seized the leadership; he, Don Sturzo, controlled the crisis and appointed the Ministers.

Bonomi had formed a Cabinet, but he was only a precursor of Don Sturzo. They whispered in the lobbies that the leader of the People's Party would drop Bonomi and, supported by the Left, would form a Cabinet with Nitti at its head.

The leader of the Fascists winced. The weakness of the democratic-socialist Government had been the cause of the success of Bolshevism. Was it these men who now wanted to return? What would their supremacy mean? The slackness of a Coalition Government, eternal squabbling between the different parties, the continued stagnation of production, strikes, and complete insecurity.

The problems, which so badly needed solution, were becoming more and more difficult. The lira had sunk to its lowest point, industry was ruined by the strikes, commerce was still tied by exceptional decrees. Labour lived in misery, and the question of emigration was still unsettled.

Who was the man to create order in this hopeless confusion? Over the Peninsula there swept one name: Mussolini.

Bonomi had failed, and the seat of the Prime Minister was occupied by Facta. "The fierce-moustached sergeant-major," as Mussolini had called him in one of his murderous political satires, started with energetic declarations:

"The Government will not tolerate any disturbance of order, and it has decided to suppress all political extremes with the full rigour of the law.

"Between Socialism and Fascism, between the extremes of the Left and those of the Right, the Government takes the middle road. And it has enough power to defend its own path."

Well, well, all this might be true, if only public opinion were not ranged behind one of the above-mentioned extremes. All this might even be successful if a few hundred thousand bayonets stood behind the declaration.

But as it was:

Not he, but Mussolini, was the commander of an armed and active force. What card could he possibly play against him? The Army? Could he believe that this body of

officers, who on account of the cowardliness of the Government had been insulted in the open streets by the socialists and communists, and who were compelled by a Government order to dress in mufti for self-defence—could he believe that *these* would be willing to command an artillery fire against Mussolini, who had delivered them from such shame? The troops? Whole regiments wore black shirts under their khaki.

Perhaps even the police would go over to him. The fingers of the Condottiere were long. Facta could not see the outlines of coming times. The Fascio—he went on grumbling—was but a mob, drummed together for this place and that.

The legions? They were useful for dispersing the undisciplined communistic bands, and setting on fire the Labour Chambers and Trade Union offices, but if they were to face regular military troops they would run away at the first rifle-shot.

Run away?

What did their leader say?

"A nation on whose soil the working people are suppressed by rude and brutal Government measures—such a nation cannot be great. We are brothers to all who work, but we do not elevate impossible partition walls between the classes. We never say that spiritual work is inferior to physical work, we are not disposed to raise physical work to the altar of divinity. We want the different classes to co-operate."

The co-operation of the classes? Was not this what everyone had been longing for? Were not poor and rich, count and peasant, middle-class and proletariat, equally sick of the eternal conflicts? Could the man be defeated who at last brought together and harmonized all the divergent interests of classes and parties?

Behind him stood his powerful Trade Unions, in which, according to their various professions, the Fascists were gathered: labourers, peasants, merchants, artisans, and so on. All these Trade Unions were included in the great Fascist party, which was guarded by the bayonets of the legions, while over these enthusiastic hosts waved the Roman Eagle—a symbol of the mighty hope which soared up from the most secret depths of their souls.

What did Facta want? Did not he listen to what they were saying in the other camp?

"Rome is our starting-point, and Rome is our goal. Rome is our ideal, and Rome is our myth. We are dreaming of a Roman Italy, full of life and intelligence, strong, powerful, and disciplined. The immortal spirit of Rome has arisen again in the Fascismus. Rome is our symbol, of Rome is our military organization, our courage, and our faith."

The far-off roar of the inundation already sounded in these words, and the onrush of the flood could not be stopped by ringing the alarm-bell. . . .

In August 1922 the socialists made unexpectedly one last effort, and organized a general strike as a breakwater against the sweeping waves of Fascism.

People shivered with fright. What would be the end of this? Mussolini was not to be played with. He had broken down many a strike during the last two years. To-morrow rifles would be again firing, hand-grenades again exploding. Blood and fighting, when everybody longed for peace and tranquillity.

But it turned out otherwise.

The public, which had tremblingly awaited the first gun-shot, witnessed quite a different sort of spectacle. The Fascists did not assault the strikers; instead they tackled the unheated locomotives, the stopped trams, and filled the empty offices. In one day they had taken charge of all the means of communication and transport. In twenty-four hours their special knowledge, their perfect organization, and their enthusiasm had restored the circulation of Italy's blood. Every organization of the Fascio worked like a machine, and thus the strike ended in the shortest possible time in a disgraceful fiasco.

Public opinion already looked upon the Duce as upon a deliverer. This man had showed first how to triumph in a conflict, and now he showed that he was able to triumph also by peaceful means. He had drawn the poison-fangs from the dreaded strikes. Was it to be wondered at if, after this, he became the One Man, the deliverer, the *dux*, the "incomparable leader"?

The breaking down of the general strike by peaceful and novel means, when everybody had been expecting the

old conflict, this was perhaps the most brilliant political manœuvre of Mussolini. He was now rapidly approaching the zenith of his popularity. What was the secret of his success?

He never did what everybody expected, but always what everybody longed for.

CHAPTER XII

BEFORE THE RUBICON

MUSSOLINI had now become complete master of the situation. Those who were his adherents would have sacrificed their lives for him, and even those who did not dare to emulate his bold and stormy career were fascinated by his constant success. The Nationalists—the “blueshirts,” who hitherto had worked in separate organizations, parallel to the Fascisti—now completely joined the movement of Mussolini. Federzoni and Corradini, the two brilliant publicists and leaders of the Nationalists, began to understand that they must combine with the greater force if they wanted to safeguard their future. There was but one point at issue between them—the King. Mussolini was a Republican, and they were Royalists. If this difference could be eliminated, then there was no force which could prevent the complete victory of Fascism.

Mussolini was not blinded by his own successes, and he approached his aim with cold precaution. Those two wonderful flowers of the Latin race—Caesar and Napoleon—owed all their attraction and success to that deep and innate quality which combined, in perfect harmony, the boldest imagination with the coolest logic. At one time the former, at another time the latter, of these qualities got the upper hand, but the secret of their greatness had been just this instinctive talent, always to know which of these two qualities must be brought into play to attain their end.

Mussolini was a chip of the same block, and on the eve of triumph he knew how to keep his bold and lofty imagination within the cold restrictions of logic.

As he had now shown the public that he was also able to break down a strike by peaceful means, and as, on this occasion, everybody had had evidence of the fact that the Fascismus had enough power completely to secure the undisturbed activity of the State and of the social mechanism, he could quietly begin his campaign for the complete downfall of socialism. Throughout the whole of Northern Italy the Fascio summoned the socialists to resign the positions they occupied in the municipal councils. This demand was a bold and dictatorial one,

because the socialists had formerly been put into these positions by the public will. But there was nothing to be done. The socialists were already too much afraid of Mussolini to run the risk of serious opposition. Nevertheless, they resisted here and there; in Milan they were turned out of the town-hall by force of arms, but in most places, foreseeing their defeat, they resigned voluntarily and retired from active politics.

On the 20th of September, in Udine, thousands gathered together to listen to the leader:

"We represent the spirit which once carried the legions of the consuls to the farthest limits of the earth. We want Rome to become the pulsating heart and quick mind of the powerful Italy of the future. The masses are not a divinity, for intelligence counts for more than numbers. We do not proclaim the conflict of the classes but their co-operation.

"Our programme? It is a plain one. We want to govern Italy. Here we must face a great problem. Is this transformation possible without the overthrow of the monarchy?"

Instead of a direct reply he answered with a new question: "Why are we Republicans? Because we can see that the King is not King enough."

The Royalists looked at each other. Well, with this fellow one could come to an agreement. He is not eager to become the President of a Republic. He would not go against the Royal Family if he could see that, from this side, no obstacles were put in his way.

Meanwhile Mussolini had pronounced the words which showed that getting into power meant to him only the first step towards the realization of his gigantic plans.

"Our movement is but at its prehistoric stage and only now is it beginning to develop. But to-morrow history will begin."

Facta started up in alarm: "History will begin! What does this mean? Words, only words. Nobody can move as long as the armed force is in my hands."

The Fascio was, however, already moving. At the end of September 1922, at a secret meeting, the executive committee granted Mussolini plenipotentiary power.

Facta knew nothing of all this. He only saw that Mussolini was speaking here to-day, there to-morrow,

proclaiming the doing away with Liberalism, socialism, democracy, and all foreign political ideals.

"We do not need any coloured reprints, because in Italy is to be found the original of every political ideal."

Facta smiled deprecatingly: "What is this journalist making such a fuss about?" The journalist knew what he was doing. The smile would have frozen on the face of the Prime Minister if, on the first days of October, he could have taken a peep into the study of his adversary. . . .

On the white paper the historical phrases already loomed:

"First movement.—The occupation of the public buildings in the larger towns of the kingdom.

"Second movement.—The concentration of the Fascist forces around Santa Marinella, Foligno, Tivoli, and Volturmo.

"Third movement.—Ultimatum to the King, demanding the immediate surrender of the power.

"Fourth movement.—Sudden attack upon Rome. The seizure of the power, the occupation of the Ministries. In the case of a battle the Fascist troops return to the reserve drawn up in Foligno.

"Fifth movement.—The forming of the Fascist Government in one of the central Italian towns. The concentration of the entire force of the blackshirts and general attack against Rome."

Not even in his dreams had Facta thought of such a thing. He was vexed at his eternal Government crises. The Right Wing, with Orlando and Don Sturzo at its head, turned also against him. They were unaware also that Mussolini had already worked out a perfect revolutionary plan behind the scenes, but they felt that something was rotten. Mussolini demanded Ministerial portfolios for his blackshirts, and Orlando's party knew that this immense force could not be excluded from power, although it had but few representatives in Parliament. Negotiations and combinations began. The lobbies were swarming. It would be good to have the Fascists in the Government; if they were in power they would behave more quietly. Perhaps the whole movement could be demobilized; the

point of view on the Ministerial benches is different from that in editorial offices.

Thus argued the politicians of the Parliament in Rome; but the man who had grown over their heads did not claim Ministerial posts in order to have his mouth shut.

His conditions were rejected; Facta snubbed him.

"You have not even been an Under-Secretary of State, how could you hope to become a Minister? Least of all, Prime Minister. Who are you?"

The other smiled silently: "I will show you."

On the 24th of October special editions reported strange news from Naples. Under the flaming crater of Vesuvius forty thousand blackshirts had assembled. Whence had they come? How had they come? From all parts of Italy. Some by train, some on foot. They appeared in serried black ranks, as if a vast army had suddenly sprung out of the ground in order to terrify its adversary by its mere presence. From morning till noon they marched past a motionless rider, before whom they lowered their flags and blew their trumpets, their eagles gleaming in the brilliant morning sunlight.

The ground shook with the trampling of thousands of feet, and from thousands of throats swelled and roared the ceaseless shout:

—*Duce! A Roma! A Roma!*

It was nearly noon before the last cohort had passed by and before the trampling and shouting had died away. But the wind caught up the cry and rolled it through the town:

—*Duce! A Roma! A Roma!*

Here, for the first time, Mussolini faced the vast host of the Fascio. He knew separately the leaders and troops ordered to Naples, but he had never met them thus, welded together by one will and one heart. He spoke no word at the review. At the public meeting in the afternoon the San Carlo Theatre was already crowded to suffocation, when his cold, striking face rose above the throng:

"We have come to Naples from every part of Italy that we may unite in friendship and love."

Light, clear-cut words. Mussolini is a brilliant speaker,

who knows that he must first create a deathly silence in order the more effectively to lash up the passions of his hearers:

"The whole of Italy has its eyes upon our meeting because, I can assure you, there is no exaggeration in saying that in post-war Europe no movement proves to be more arresting and epoch-making than the Italian Fascismus. This movement, which is at once political, syndicalist, militarist, and religious, unites in itself every need, every hope, and every aspiration of the modern Italian soul. . . ."

The crowd began to stir. The speaker's voice grew a shade stronger, his gestures more expressive:

"We wanted the State to abandon its grotesque neutrality, which made it stagger between the national and international forces. We asked it to solve the most burning financial questions, which are still threatening with collapse the financial position both of the State and of private individuals. We claimed five Ministerial portfolios, and a Government committee for emigration. The Government's answer to this was ridiculous. They said we should accept a nominal position in the Cabinet, or be satisfied with some subordinate post."

The crowd broke into tumultuous uproar, and Mussolini struck his raised hand furiously upon the table:

"It is force that will have the last word."

The speaker sat down amidst great acclamations. Michele Bianchi, the General Secretary of the Fascist Party, then stepped upon the platform:

"Fascists, swear by the sacred memory of our dead that you will continue the conflict."

"We swear!" shouted the crowd, and outside in the streets sounded the refrain:

"A Roma! A Roma!"

On the Piazza Plebiscito the Fascists, coming from the general meeting, mingled with the huge crowd. Before Mussolini's apartments there arose a great hurraing. The bare declaration that the matter was now to be decided by force was not enough for the excited crowd, which would fain have started at once. The cry: "A Roma! A Roma!" swept across the vast Piazza.

The leader was obliged to speak. He had to say some-

thing which would either soothe or further excite the people to revolt. Making a sign that he wanted to speak, he stepped to the parapet of the balcony, and there was a breathless silence :

"Blackshirts ! At this great demonstration we have learnt to know the fearless mentality of Naples and Central Italy. The programme for to-day has ended with this demonstration, which cannot be turned into a battle. But I say to you, in all seriousness, that it is only a question of days, or even hours, before we shall either have the Government handed over to us or seize it for ourselves."

The Naples speech crashed down upon the Parliament with the force of a bomb. As a result of the speech the King immediately returned to Rome, and Facta's Government fell. But even after the feverish excitement of the first moments, nobody realized how threatening the danger was. They did not believe Michele Bianchi when he stated in a newspaper interview that the present Government crisis was not caused by Parliament, but by forces external to it—the blackshirts assembled in Naples—and thus this crisis could not be solved by the usual political tricks.

Perhaps one could cut down Mussolini's demands a little. What does he want? Five Ministerial portfolios? Or even more—a pure Fascist Government? Of course there can be no question of that.

The Parliamentary politicians only saw that, after the Naples speech, Mussolini did not march against Rome, but quietly motored back to Milan and sent home his army. "Aha," they said, "the Duce does not dare to make a revolution. The dauntless man is only stirring up an agitation to make himself important, but in the end he will come down to negotiation. Well, then, let us negotiate. We must have a Government in which the Fascists will be represented. A Government with Facta, Orlando, or Salandra at its head. They would certainly accept Salandra; he is the greatest nationalist, and it was he who declared war. Wouldn't they even have that? Then what is the whole thing about?"

Four days after the Naples meeting the answer came. On the morning of the 28th of October, Facta, who, for want of anyone better, had remained Prime Minister, was

awakened by the arrival of a telegram. Milan reported that during the night the railway stations, the post offices, the telephones, and all the public buildings in Milan, Genoa, Cremona, and other North Italian towns had been suddenly seized by the Fascisti, and that they also held all the railway lines of that part of Italy.

Alea jacta est.

Facta rushed to the King. As he flung himself into his motor-car an urgent communication was, at the last moment, thrust into his hand.

He did not even look to see who had brought it. He tore it open in trembling agitation as the car whizzed towards the Royal Palace.

The declaration of the General Fascist Staff was in his hands, and the words danced before his eyes:

“Blackshirts!

“The decisive hour has struck. Four years ago, on this very day, the national army started the great offensive which led to victory; to-day the army of the blackshirts goes into battle for another victory, and is marching upon Rome.

“To-day the legions have been mobilized, and the martial law of the Fascio has come into force in all its severity.

“The army, which is the most important pledge of national security, is not to take part in this conflict. The Fascismus once more expresses its greatest admiration for the army which was victorious at Vittorio Veneto. Neither is the military offensive of the Fascists directed against the guardians of public order, but only against an incapable and discredited political clique, which for four long years has proved itself unable to give Italy a single decent Government.

“Those belonging to the working and productive middle class may rest assured that the Fascismus wishes to establish national order, and to increase all those forces which further material and economic well-being and development. Neither have the working classes any reason to fear the triumph of the Fascismus, because we shall loyally protect their due rights. We shall be generous and indulgent to our unarmed adversaries, but ruthless if they oppose us.

"The Fascio has drawn its sword to cut the Gordian knot, which was tightly tied round the body of the national life, preventing its free development.

"May God Almighty, and the souls of our five hundred thousand dead, be our witnesses that our resort to arms has but one aim—to save our nation and to make it powerful.

"Fascisti! We will to conquer. We shall conquer."

The Prime Minister shivered all over as he rushed along in his motor-car. A frightful light had glared in upon his narrow and bureaucratic mind, and the figure of his adversary seemed to tower above him in terrifying vastness.

What had happened? A revolt, a Government crisis, a riot, a *coup d'état*, a revolution?

More, a thousand times more.

From the conflict of classes and parties, from the dramatic clash of capital and labour, from the chaotic tumult of the twentieth century, in the red twilight of a declining age, there had stepped forth—the Man.

The new Caesar, who had crossed the Rubicon and led his legions against Rome.

PART III
THE MODERN CAESAR

CHAPTER I

LA MARCIA SU ROMA

How did this unexpected attack take place—this attack which indeed everybody had reckoned upon, but which nevertheless, by its swift and sudden rush, took everybody by surprise? After the Naples meeting everybody believed that the next day would see the Fascist Revolution. The following two days, however, were only occupied with negotiations. On the 25th and 26th of October the public only knew that, by the mediation of Dino Grandi and De Vecchi—two Fascist members of Parliament then staying in Rome—an attempt was being made to include Mussolini in the Government in some capacity or other.

Various combinations and fantastic names were buzzing about: Giolitti, or Bonomi, or Salandra as Prime Minister, and behind them, on the Ministerial benches, four or five leading members of the Fascists. That section of the public which had always kept at a distance from the Fascismus almost believed that even this crisis could be met by the usual Parliamentary forms. Mussolini would go on shouting for a little while because he wanted to become Prime Minister at any price; but finally he would make a compromise, and his party would have to be satisfied with several Ministerial portfolios. But all these arbitrary conjectures were suddenly overthrown by the mobilization of the Fasci and by the news that the legions were seizing the central Italian towns one after another.

What was the cause of this sudden attack? The history of Italy gives an answer.

When after the Naples meeting Mussolini returned to Milan—whence he watched the effect he had produced—he was somewhat in the same position as was Caesar in January of the year 48 B.C., when from Ravenna he watched the events taking place in Rome. Caesar also did not want to enter thoughtlessly into an open conflict with the Senate, but on the other hand he was not inclined to allow them to do him out of the command in Gaul. Caesar too had negotiated with Pompey, who proclaimed just as loudly that the Army was in his hand, and that he

would ruthlessly trample down every movement of the Gallic adventurer. Caesar too had been cautious, and had only decided for sudden action when, with surprising swiftness, he had crossed the Rubicon, and he had only unexpectedly attacked and occupied Rimini when he saw that he could do nothing by negotiations. Ferrero reports that, till the last minute, Caesar had kept his bold plan secret, and on the day before taking the offensive he had strolled about till late at night among the people of Ravenna. "He went to the baths, was present at a performance, examined the plans of a school for gladiators, and in the evening he gave a magnificent feast. On this great day of his life, when he was to face a fearful ordeal, he seemed everywhere quiet and cheerful. In the midst of the feast he suddenly rose, saying that he was forced to leave his guests on account of an official matter which had unexpectedly arisen." At the banquet nobody knew that, under the veil of night, Caesar would meet his cohorts, that this very night he would cross the river Rubicon, and that the next morning Rimini would be his. . . .

Up to the last moment Milan had no idea what sort of plans were flashing behind the domed brow of the Duce. He too had negotiated, he too had waited, though only for two and a half days it is true. He had vacillated and meditated because he did not want bloodshed and civil war, but he was obliged to see that by Parliamentary forms and methods he could not get into power. He was forced also to cast the dice, for if he did not, the magnificent swing of his movement would be arrested. He made up his mind. On the evening of the 26th of October, whilst in the political circles of Rome the greatest confusion was prevailing, because of the threatened failure of the negotiations, Mussolini appeared in the Scala Opera House and listened quietly to the Bridal March from *Lohengrin*. On the 27th of October, when he had already sent the mobilization order to the General Staff of the Fascist army at Perugia, he strolled calmly through the arcades; and in the evening, seated in one of the boxes of the Manzoni Theatre, in company with Margherita Sarfatti and two other collaborators, he watched and applauded the play with intense interest.

In the middle of the second act someone knocked at the

door and a young collaborator on the staff of the *Popolo d'Italia* slipped into the box:

"Sir, they have telephoned. It has begun."

Mussolini rose with the greatest self-possession—he left his colleagues in the box, in order to avoid any sensation—and walked down to the door alone. There he threw himself into a motor-car and rushed to the offices of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

The editorial staff was burning with revolutionary fire. The telephone rang and rang. It reported from Cremona that Farinacci—the leader of the Fascists in that place—carried away by his fiery temperament, could not await the fixed moment, and an hour earlier than necessary had occupied the post, telegraph, and telephone offices, the railway station and the Prefecture.

The revolution had begun.

By midnight, around the premises of the *Popolo d'Italia*, the headquarters of the revolution, barricades were towering, and behind them armed legionaries watched the night. Motor-cars rushed towards the surrounding towns, carrying the last copies of the mobilization order, which had been ready some days ago. During this night and the following morning the blackshirts rose throughout the whole of Italy. The carefully considered military plan of the Duce was indeed perfect, and it worked in an exemplary way. Instead of one great and united offensive, the railway, post, and public offices were seized by small, swiftly moving troops of blackshirts, appearing in the various towns as if they had sprung from the earth. By the middle of the day they had in their hands Ancona, Perugia, Siena, Florence, Pisa, and Arezzo, every strategically important town of Central Italy. This same attack, which was executed everywhere by the legions stationed in the different places, at one blow captured Naples and South Italy. The extreme North of Italy and Sicily, these two remote points, were territories without any influence upon the military action, and thus they could remain intact. But, by the occupation of Central and South Italy, a gigantic ringfire of revolt embraced Rome by the evening of the 28th of October. Here and there one could still find a small gap perhaps, but by to-morrow it would be impossible to escape.

The first movement of the military plan was completed

in less than twenty-four hours. Now followed the second movement, the concentration of the forces, the starting of the attack upon Rome. The greater part of the mobilized army of a hundred thousand blackshirts pushed down in separate military trains towards Rome. They came from three directions to Santa Marinella, Monterotondo, and Tivoli, to these three important strategic points, whence the decisive attack upon the capital had to start. The railway had been in their hands from the first moment; they could do with it as they liked. Beflagged express trains roared through the Peninsula, and the rushing rattle of the wheels was outshouted by the march:

Giovinezza, giovinezza
Primavera di bellezza . . .

—Youth, youth, spring of beauty—sounded and resounded throughout Italy, the passionate song, the Fascist *Marseillaise*, which by its swift, maddening, feverishly beating rhythm, lashes to double speed even troops tired to death.

Mussolini did not move from Milan. He remained with his newspaper till the last moment. The telephone rang ceaselessly; Rome came, whence Dino Grandi reported complete confusion; Perugia came, the headquarters whence they reported that everything was proceeding perfectly, without a blow, and that the reserve troops—about a hundred thousand men—were camping in Foligno waiting for orders.

And Rome? The King? The troops?

Nowhere any opposition, nowhere a single gun-shot. The amazingly swift attack of Mussolini had completely embarrassed the situation. Facta, who after the Naples meeting had made no secret of his conviction that the Fascist revolution could now be broken down only by arms—Facta proclaimed martial law, by this provoking the outbreak of civil war; but in the first success of the revolutionary attack he had to collapse. On the morning of the 28th of October the headquarters in Perugia received reports from Rome, stating that the troops and police were to arrest Mussolini and the members of the quadrumvirate: but by 12.40 p.m. a new telegram arrived. The proclamation of martial law had been withdrawn.

What had happened?

"I was the man," said the King to one of the Fascist members of Parliament staying in Rome, "who refused to subscribe the decree proclaiming martial law. I want the Italians to know this, because within a week they may have forgotten it."

Those who on this stormy and tumultuous day were able to be near the King, might have been witnesses of a dramatic struggle. Opposing him stood a revolution of which he could not yet know whether it might not want to overthrow his throne. By his side stood his Councillors and his Prime Minister, who demanded a ruthless settlement of accounts with the rebels. But he did not want a civil war, he could not oppose his troops to the Army which had also been his Army during the Great War. Could he have the men shot who had fought at the Isonzo, on the Doberdo, and on the rocks of the Tyrol? Could he fire on the youth of Italy, the great army of seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen-year-old boys, who were carried along, mostly unarmed, among the legions. Unarmed, but with a black shirt on their backs, a simple stick in their hands, and with ardent enthusiasm in their hearts. Could he direct his machine-guns against his old soldiers from the Front? Could he cannonade the pride of the nation—its youth?

The answer might have involved the germ of a frightful tragedy, and it was indeed urgent to give some kind of reply to the question. There was no time for irresolution. The legions kept on advancing, and the ring of steel closed tighter and tighter round Rome.

On the 28th of October, at 5 p.m., Mussolini was just talking in his study to Giulio Barella, the Milanese correspondent of several foreign newspapers, when the telephone rang. Rome had rung him up.

"Hallo. . . . Yes, Mussolini is speaking. Hallo. . . . His Majesty wishes to confer with me? I am only willing to go to Rome if I receive an official mandate to form a Government. Otherwise I shall only move at the head of the legions."

It was an intimate political friend of Mussolini who had spoken to him from Rome.

As the Duce put down the receiver, Giulio Barella stole a glance at him:

"Eccellenza," he said, giving the title in anticipation, "it seems that you will have to form a Government to-morrow. I speak now as a journalist. Give me the favour of an interview. How will the Government be composed? Will it consist only of Fascists?"

"No," was the reply; "I want to take into the Government some expert older politicians. And only if this should prove to be impossible shall I make the transformation at one *coup*. But then it will be a pure Fascist Government, from the Prime Minister to the humblest door-keeper."

He had not to wait long. The legions marched towards Rome without striking a blow. On the 29th of October, in the premises of the *Popolo d'Italia*, the telephone tinkled once more. General Mangarini, First Adjutant of the King, had rung up the Editor-in-Chief:

"Yes, it is Mussolini speaking. Thank you. I ask for telegraphic notification of the official mandate. The moment I have it in my hands I will go to Rome. I can have it? Yes. . . . Thank you, General."

The man who rose from the telephone was Prime Minister of Italy. The man who ran across the corridor was still—the journalist.

—"Arnaldo," he shouted to his brother, "is the printing office ready? We must issue a special edition."

His brother rushed to him, his face beaming with joy:

—"What is the news? I wonder . . . You aren't really . . ."

—"Yes, really. The King has entrusted to me the formation of a Government."

Within two minutes the office boy was rushing with the manuscript to the printers. The pages were cut up and distributed to the compositors. In five minutes the proofs were ready. The page was imposed with lightning speed. A quarter of an hour later the great rotary machine had started, and the roaring cylinder was pouring forth history in a white cataract. . . .

Mussolini Prime Minister. . . . Special edition. . . .

The street was flaming with enthusiasm, and the *Popolo d'Italia* was snatched from the hands of the newsboys.

At 7 p.m. a new dispatch was brought to Mussolini. The official mandate had now arrived in writing. He read the telegram of the King in silence, and then handed it over to his friends without a word. One of them asked:

"What are you thinking of now, Benito?"

The silent face grew pale, its expression softened:

"Of my father."

At eight in the evening the Milanese railway station was crowded to suffocation with people. Between the entrance and the Rome express a line of blackshirts stood on guard. They were waiting for the Duce.

He came. He wore a grey overcoat, from under the turned-up collar of which loomed his black shirt; his hat was drawn down over his eyes. His face was even paler than usual.

"Evviva! Evviva!"

The men fling up their hands in the Roman fashion, the women wave their handkerchiefs. The man in the grey overcoat stands still beneath the shower of blossoms, the frenzied outburst of enthusiasm. He has to speak. This is all that he says:

"From to-morrow, Italy will not only have a Ministry but a Government."

The hurraing shakes the sky. Suddenly somebody steps before him. The station-master of Milan humbly presents himself to the Right Honourable Signor Mussolini, Prime Minister of Italy.

Mussolini shakes hands with him.

"I want to start at exactly eight o'clock—the scheduled time. From to-day everything must go as punctually as clockwork."

Enthusiasm and exultation accompany the new Prime Minister to the saloon-car. He goes up the steps; in the corridor Giulio Barella awaits him, the foreign newspapers have to be informed of the departure. The Editor-in-Chief looks smilingly at his journalistic colleague:

"Come with me. I guarantee that your report will beat the rival papers."

Enthusiasm climbs up after him into the carriage and inundates the corridor with hot waves of joyful shouting. Barella asks the Prime Minister about his family:

"What did your wife say when she heard that you had received the mandate of the Premiership? What did she say when you parted from her?"

"She did not say much; she embraced me in silence. She only said: 'Come back soon.'"

The roar of hurraing continues . . .

—"And the children?"

—"The two boys did not say anything at all; I asked my daughter, who is the eldest, whether she would like to go to school in Rome? Do you know what she answered? She just pouted and jumped into my arms: 'I don't care about Rome. Do come back.'"

The train moves. At the tumultuous moment of departure the cry bursts out with elemental force, feverishly and rhythmically, like the rattling wheels, like the resounding footsteps of marching legions:

"Duce! A Roma! A Roma!"

CHAPTER II

THE KING AND THE REBEL

THE journey of Mussolini was an unending panorama of frenzied enthusiasm and exultation. The train, as it rushed through the blind night, was preceded everywhere by the news and by one outburst of rapture. As the seventeenth express whizzed along, everywhere hurrahs rose to greet it; where it stopped to rest for a moment it could hardly tear itself away from the pressure and embraces of the joyous crowds.

At 7.15 in the morning they arrived at Civita Vecchia, the last important station before Rome. Trumpets blared in the fresh morning air, tiny Roman flags fluttered in the wind, and the strains of the Fascist March soared up triumphantly. "Where is Mussolini?"

The tumultuous excitement became dead silence when he descended from the last carriage. The commanders of the Fascist troops, which had pushed down as far as Civita Vecchia, presented themselves in serried ranks. Nowhere was a word spoken, nowhere was there the slightest movement. Only two eyes of magic power flashed along the armed ranks, only one hard voice was carried by the morning wind: "Our triumphant attack upon Rome was the logical consequence of the Naples meeting. His Majesty the King has called me to Rome in order to form a Government. I shall form it. I expect from you the utmost quietness, order, and discipline. We must not degrade, in any way, the greatness of our victory."

Hands were flung up, the Duce said good-bye to the officers, and then he stepped before the troops:

"Fascists! Our movement has been crowned by a complete triumph. We have won the victory without a gunshot, and the cause of this lies in the fact that no revolution has ever been a purer and more perfect interpreter of the will of the nation than the Fascismus.

"You, of course, know that His Majesty the King—to whom we are inexpressibly grateful for having withdrawn the stupid and grotesque decree of yesterday—that His Majesty the King has called me to Rome to form a Government.

"Till the Government is formed you will remain mobilized, and you will keep in your hands what you have already occupied. But I expect from you the greatest order and the greatest earnestness.

"Italy is in our hands. I swear to lead our country once more in the path of its ancient greatness.

"Long live the Fascismus! Long live Italy!"

The silence was suddenly shattered, and a shout that rent the sky rose round the figure of the leader. The train rushed on.

One station more, Santa Marinella. They stopped between the bayonets of the legions ranged on both sides of the railway.

"I am going to Rome in order to form a Government. Our victory is complete, but you will remain here for twenty-four hours more. It may happen that we shall meet with some difficulties in forming a Government."

The train tore him away from their embracing arms, and bore him towards Rome. It was about ten o'clock in the morning. Looking through the windows he could see the thousands of men as they stood, hat in hand, along the railways. When he glanced towards the highroad he could see huge black waves rolling along through the vast sea of dust—the legions marching towards Rome. And he could hear the rattle of the wheels drowned by the shouting and by the triumphant war-cry: "A noi!" The ceaseless roaring avalanche of enthusiasm and exultation seemed to push the train forwards. At last, after the mad speed of this giddy rush, it stood still, exhausted, under the glass cupola of the station at Rome. It was 10.42 a.m.

—Alala!

The Greek warriors of the "Anabasis" might have greeted their deliverer—the sea—with just such a sky-rending shout as that with which the soldiers of the Roman cohort received the train which had brought them their triumph—the Leader. They plucked at his dress, they seized his hands, so that in the first moments of enthusiasm he could not even move, while round him fell a shower of blossoms.

When he looked up a colonel was standing before him in the grey-green uniform of the Army. It was the military commander of the railway station.

—"Now that I have come to Rome as Prime Minister of Italy, my first greeting is to the glorious Army. Long live the King! *Evviva Italia!*"

This was the first sentence Mussolini pronounced in Rome. The hurraing crowd could hardly hear the reply of the old soldier.

—"The Italian Army will always be ready to do its duty."

The square before the station was darkened by an immense crowd of people. Along the streets Fascisti were ranged on both sides of the road. The car could hardly push towards the Hotel Savoia, the Fascist headquarters. Mussolini had not even time to change. By eleven o'clock the car was rushing on its way to the Royal Palace.

Before the Quirinal, Carabinieri in full uniform were standing guard. Around the palace was a closed phalanx of armed Fascists. The bands were playing the March of Youth, and the Roman Eagles were gleaming in the bright sunlight as the car of the Duce stopped before the entrance at 11.15—an historical moment in the life of Italy.

At last the Rebel and the King stood face to face.

—"Majesty," said a toneless voice, "excuse my coming in a black shirt, which I have brought from a battle-field where fortunately no blood was shed. I am a humble servant of Your Majesty, and I bring with me that Italy which won the war and which has arisen once more in this new victory."

At 12.5 p.m. Mussolini left the King's study as nominated Prime Minister of Italy, and his car was nearly stopped by the shouting masses impatient to hear him. He could hardly make his way to the Hotel Savoia.

But Rome could not be silenced. The soul of the city, which had seen the triumphal processions of the Caesars, was still glowing with instinctive remembrance, and the crowd before the new Caesar's apartments roared and roared with boisterous energy:

—"Hear Mussolini! Hear! Hear! . . ."

A face, hard as steel, appeared between the curtains of the balcony:

—"Fascists! Romans! The Fascist movement has triumphed. I have come to Rome to form a new Cabinet. Within a few hours you will no longer have a Ministry—but a Government."

The hand descended energetically on the balustrade of the balcony, and the satisfied masses went home hurrahing. Some days would pass before Mussolini could succeed in forming this Government, and till then they could only wait.

Some days? It is true that hitherto the Government crises had been put off for weeks, but this man would be able to solve even the political situation in a few days.

In a few days?

Mussolini arrived in Rome at 10.42 a.m., by 11.15 he was in audience with the King; at 12.5 p.m. he left the Quirinal, and by 5 p.m. the special editions of the papers were sweeping along the streets, proclaiming the almost incredible news that the Mussolini Government had already been formed, that the Cabinet was not purely Fascist, but, to the general amazement, a Coalition Government; that the King had approved of the Cabinet list, and that the nominations were already officially published.

By the time the news had reached the papers, the Government had taken the oath, and by the time they had got hold of this fact, Mussolini was receiving, in the Hotel Savoia, the reports of the commanders of the legions, and of the consuls. Forty thousand Fascists had armed in Rome, and it was to be feared that these fanatical and frenzied masses might do something to spoil the sublime moment of triumph.

"Sir"—Mussolini turned to the leader of the State Railway Company—"it is exactly eight o'clock. Please arrange that by to-morrow at 8 p.m., i.e. within twenty-four hours, the army of forty thousand blackshirts be transported from Rome, and every cohort taken to the place where it was stationed."

The old functionary was simply dumbfounded:

—"Excellency, that is a sheer impossibility. Not even in the war could we work with such speed. At least three days are necessary for the transportation of forty thousand men."

—"I said twenty-four hours. Impossibility is to me unknown. Please erase this word from your memory, and see that you obey my order."

During that single night sixty military trains left Rome, running in all directions. The Army so suddenly transported

from the city, which the majority had never seen before, did not grumble, did not complain; it obeyed; so great was the discipline among them, and with such magic force did the Leader rule over their ranks.

It was half-past eleven at night. The streets resounded to the footsteps of the passing troops, the town was sunk in dreams, after the exciting events of the day. Even the members of the Fascist General Staff were overcome by weariness; but the Man who for three days had only slept a few hours, the Man to whom every minute of this day meant the work of months and years in his life, he kept watch and turned cheerfully to the members of the new Government:

—“Gentlemen, it is half-past eleven already. Time to begin to-day’s Cabinet meeting.”

CHAPTER III

S T A R T

THE next morning Rome could scarcely recover from its astonishment. Even the people, who, on account of the unsatisfactory political and economic situation, had so ardently longed for the strong hand, were, at the first moment, terrified by the torrent of blackshirts rushing upon Rome. On the night of the Marcia su Roma a great question-mark loomed over the dreams of the city. What if this Government, too, should not keep its word, if this movement also were to go astray and wander into the labyrinth of destruction?

With the first rays of the rising sun fear was dissipated. The leader knew very well that the first days of his régime were the most important. If he succeeded with the public in awaking confidence, if the actions of the first moment were to render him sympathetic to the masses, then he would have accumulated such a moral capital as would pay abundant interest in the critical days of his Government. For this very reason he had, on the first day, formed his Cabinet with unprecedented swiftness. He took care to dissipate the sudden outbreak of fear on the part of the public that his régime would mean irresolution or destruction. The order, which had not even left enough time for the legions to take breath after the march upon Rome, but within twenty-four hours had turned back and dispersed these huge masses in all directions; the order which, on the first night of his getting into power, had commanded the demobilization of the Fascist forces; the list of the Coalition Government which appeared in the morning papers—all these things could not fail to produce an effect upon the public.

And the next morning the placards of the Fascist General Staff gleamed along the walls. They announced the demobilization of the blackshirts, summoning them to abstain from all violence and disturbance. "The Fascismus has completely triumphed," proclaimed the placard, "but the Fascismus is much too wise to spoil this decisive victory by precipitate action. On the eve of the great reconstruction the Duce has formed a Coalition Govern-

ment because he is for the co-operation of the entire strength of the nation. To assist the new Government has become the holy duty of every Italian."

People looked at each other. It seemed that they might trust this Prime Minister. He was not dizzied by his own success, and he did not yet want to misuse the power which Fate had given into his hands. It is true he had reserved for himself the portfolios of Foreign Minister and Home Secretary, but two brilliant names stood after his in the Cabinet, the two most popular men in Italy: Admiral Thaon di Revel, and General Diaz, the Commander-in-Chief in the Great War. By their side in the Ministry were none but excellent practical experts: Federzoni, De Stefani, Oviglio. . . . All of them prominent men in their respective parties; and none of them was ever seen to strike the benches, or scream hoarsely during the stormy sessions of the Chamber. After them came the new State Secretaries—energetic, vigorous men, brimful of life and youth. This Government was bound by no promises, and pledged to no direction. It wore the harness of no hidebound political system, but with a drawn sword in hand faced openly and directly the gigantic problems of life.

The Prime Minister knelt before the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This was the first place where he bowed his head.

The people stared at him. He was thirty-eight years old, but he did not look more than twenty-five. Thirty-eight years old? The fanatical enthusiasm of youth was good for stirring and lashing up the masses, but would it suffice to save the country, would it be able to grasp with a firm hand the complicated machinery of State?

In his twenty-third year Pitt was Chancellor of the Exchequer, at twenty-four he had become Prime Minister of the whole British Empire. Scipio gained his first battle when he was but twenty-nine; and Pompey had only completed his twenty-third year when he was victorious for the first time. Condé at twenty-seven had destroyed the German and Spanish armies, and the other famous marshal of the King of the Sun, Turenne, had commanded troops when twenty-three, and at twenty-six was venerated after a long series of brilliant victories as the greatest general of Europe. Descartes proclaimed the *cogito ergo sum* when he was nineteen; at sixteen Pascal

had already surpassed the first mathematicians of the world. Fénelon delivered religious orations at fifteen; in his twenty-second year Kepler was professor of astronomy. The eight years old Goethe spoke German, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. Michelangelo executed his Fight of the Centaurs when he was nineteen; at twelve Mozart wrote his first opera. When Tasso was but thirty he had already written the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. By the time he was thirteen Haydn had composed a Mass; the ten years old Händel wrote sonatas, and little Canova had to be whipped when he was four because he stole butter from the pantry, in order to model lions with it. Victor Hugo was a dramatic author at the age of fifteen; Petöfi was but twenty-seven when he finished his phenomenal career. Gustavus Adolphus, the Swedish king, conquered the Russians and Poles at the age of thirty. Charles XII was eighteen when he dispersed the allied army of the Russian Tsar, the Polish King, the Elector of Saxony, and the King of Denmark; Frederick the Great was twenty-eight at the Battle of Mollwitz; Mattias Corvinus was not yet thirty-five when he defeated the most powerful armies of Europe, the troops of the German Roman Emperor, of the Sultan of Turkey, and of the King of Bohemia. At the age of twenty-two Napoleon started the attack upon Toulon, and at the age of thirty-four, after world-famed triumphs, he became Emperor of France.

The thirty-eight years old Prime Minister rose from the steps of the marble monument. Around him the eagles gleamed in salute, and the sounds of the *Giovinezza* soared up with jubilant triumph:

Youth, youth
The spring of beauty . . .

Is there any march in the world more feverish, more fiery, and more beautiful than this?

CHAPTER IV

THE PRIME MINISTER'S MAIDEN SPEECH

—“GENTLEMEN, the fact that I am here to-day to explain the programme of the Government is but a mere formality, for which I expect from you neither special attention nor recognition of any kind. For many years every Government crisis has broken out in Parliament, and has been solved in Parliament, by the aid of more or less important political manœuvres. But now all this is at an end. The Italian nation has overthrown a Ministry, and in spite of the indignation of Parliament it has chosen a Government of outsiders. I have neither the time nor the inclination to enter into an argument with the upholders of super-parliamentarism; I am simply here to strengthen the position of the Revolution.

—“Everybody ought to know that I have come into Parliament to defend and develop to the utmost the revolution of the blackshirts which has at last brought to Italy development, progress, and the balance of power. With this force of three hundred thousand young men, ready for anything—I may say, fanatically ready to carry out my orders—I could have intimidated and severely punished all those who abused, hindered, and vilified our movement. If I had liked I could have turned this grey, dull building into a barracks for my troops.

—“I could have driven out the whole Parliament, and I could have formed a pure Fascist Government, if I had wished. I did not do so, for I did not want to do this, at least not now, in the first hours of victory. I have formed a Coalition Government, not because I attach any importance to Parliamentary majorities—I shall do what I like, with their aid or without it—but because I wanted to bring together for reconstructive work the entire creative force of the nation.

—“From this place I greet my collaborators, Ministers, and Secretaries of State, who have undertaken with me the responsibility of this historical crisis. I remember with gratitude the sympathy of the majority of the Italian working classes who have supported the Fascist movement

by their active or passive solidarity. I believe I am interpreting the thoughts of the majority of the Chamber—or at all events those of the majority of the nation—when I turn in homage to the King, who refused the useless and reactionary measures of the last few hours, who prevented the outbreak of a civil war, and who allowed the mighty tide of Fascism to flow into the dry veins of a Parliamentary State.

—“Now that I have undertaken the office of Prime Minister I am asked from every side for a programme. It is not programmes that we want in Italy, but the men to carry them through. Every problem of Italian life is already worked out on paper, but the will to transform these plans into facts is wanting. The Government represents this firm and decided will.

—“As regards the general foreign policy of Italy, we must keep in mind the dignity and the interests of our nation. We cannot allow ourselves the luxury of an altruistic policy—that is to say, to support or assist anyone out of mere friendly feeling. Italy is even to-day an important factor in international relations, and she will have still more to be reckoned with in the future. They must learn this abroad. We do not wish to show off, but at the same time we have no intention of underrating ourselves. He who wants from us concrete proofs of friendship must give us the same. Fascist Italy neither wants to tear up the peace treaties nor to follow her Allies through fire and water.

—“Rome stands on the same level as Paris and London, and Italy has also the task before her of testing the practical value of the Entente. Does the Entente still exist, or does it not? What is the attitude of the Entente to Germany, to Russia, and to a possible Russo-German alliance? What is the position of Italy in this Entente? Of that Italy which has lost the important strategic positions on the Adriatic and the Mediterranean—and that, not only by the cowardice of her own Governments—of that Italy which did not receive a single colony, and which has been overwhelmed by war debts, incurred for the sake of the common cause?

—“It is my intention to discuss frankly the problem of the Entente at my first meeting with the English and

French Prime Ministers. This conference may have one of the two following results: Either the Entente will overcome its own internal conflicts, and change into a homogeneous, powerful, and well-balanced block, where all the members have equal rights and duties; or its last hour has struck, and Italy, regaining her freedom of action, will go her own way and defend her own interests.

—"The main lines of our internal policy may be expressed in three words: wealth, work, and discipline. The financial problem is, no doubt, a great one: we must re-establish as quickly as possible the balance of the State finances. We shall give privileges neither to the productive bourgeoisie nor to the working classes, for the interests of both must be harmonized with the most important interests of national production. The working proletariat has no reason to fear us. The fundamental principle of our emigration policy is that the Italian emigrant should never cease to feel himself an Italian citizen, and for that very reason our representatives abroad will defend them in the most energetic way. We will allow no internal disturbances; everyone must honour the laws. To religion, especially to the Catholic religion, which is that of the Italian nation, we shall grant our fullest protection. He who resists the power of the State will be liable to the severest penalties. The State and the Government have to-day but one task—to recognize that, except for an insignificant minority who make their living by politics, there are forty million Italians on this Peninsula, who only want to work and produce without being disturbed by abnormal happenings.

—"As words and speeches will probably be in vain, the Fascist Government has organized a united police, which will guard with merciless energy the peace of the country. The Army and the Navy, so dear to every Italian, will—after being efficiently organized—form the greatest reserve force of the nation.

—"Gentlemen, from this speech you will have been able to gather the programme of the Government. So long as it is possible I will not govern against this Chamber, but the Chamber must recognize that its term of life is at most two years, and may be only two days. I demand plenipotentary power, for I wish to take over the complete responsibility.

—"To-day, without plenipotentary power, as you know well, we cannot increase production by a single lira. By this plenipotentary power we do not intend to exclude the possibility of your co-operation. Whoever wants to help us will be cordially received, whether he be an M.P., a Senator, or the humblest citizen. We must all feel with religious solemnity the difficulties of our task. We demand plenipotentary power in order to re-establish the economic situation of the State.

—"We desire to carry out a pacific foreign policy on a basis of dignity and reserve: and this we shall do. Our enemies of yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow are greatly mistaken if they think that our Government will have a short life. This is a childish belief and a simple illusion. Our Government relies upon all classes of the people, our Party comprises in its ranks the freshest, the most hard-working, and the most efficient of this generation of Italians.

—"There is no doubt that during the last days we have made gigantic strides in the direction of spiritual unity. Everyone has again become conscious of the Italian Fatherland, both in the North and in the South, on the Peninsula and in the islands, in the capital and in the Colonies.

—"Gentlemen, leave off worrying the country with your empty prattle. I hear that fifty-two members want to speak in the debate on the Government programme. Don't you think this number is excessive? It is not this which is our task, but to work with clear heart and active spirit at creating the future and the greatness of the nation. I believe that God will allow me to complete my work in triumph."

CHAPTER V

FROM THE PARLIAMENT TO THE VATICAN

WITH this bold and cruel speech Mussolini introduced himself to the Italian Chamber. The foreign powers might well be satisfied by it, because it told them that the new Prime Minister would ratify the Treaty of Rapallo, and the other points agreed upon; but at home the Prime Minister's maiden speech deprived his political adversaries even of the possibility of opposition. The fighter, whose whole mentality had been in complete contrast to the quiet middle-class train of ideas; the statesman, who hated Bolshevism because he saw in it nothing but destruction; the socialist who opposed the ideal of Liberalism because he saw that it meant only the unrestrained liberty of Money would have certainly dissolved Parliament—this typical representative of the old system—if he had listened to his heart and not to his brain. But his reason told him not to touch any fundamental political question before he had solved the economic questions, and it told him also to accomplish the great transformation by degrees, as the problems arose, and as his men learned the management of the State machinery. Thus, at the first innings, he considered it sufficient to intimidate Parliament, but determined to keep it together as long as it did not put any obstacles in his way.

He succeeded in attaining this aim by his introductory speech. Whilst he spoke not a sound could be heard in the hall, where for years the most turbulent storms had been raging. They all bent their heads and allowed the Prime Minister to lash them with his cruel sentences. Nitti, one of the greatest adversaries of the Fascismus, wrote: "Not a single man in the Parliament protested, and it was deeply sad and humiliating to witness that nobody dared to reply to this disdainful voice." Nothing could better indicate the complete decline of Italian Parliamentarism than these words; and thus who could wonder that the public listened rather to this strong voice than to that Parliament which had not a single member to resent this tone, which

nobody had hitherto ever dared to use to the representatives of the nation.

From the Liberal side only one answer was given in the Senate, where Senator Albertini, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Corriera della Sera*, defended by a brilliant political argument the fundamental laws of Liberalism, and traced the dangers of the revolutionary Fascist forces. According to Albertini, the Fascismus had introduced its revolutionary ideas into the State machinery, and this ever-fermenting, turbulent, and tensive energy would lead, sooner or later, to a disastrous explosion. There is no way out of this—proclaimed Albertini—but the way of pure Liberalism, which, even taking its faults into account, does not mean eternal unrest, but by its clear and crystallized principles insures order and tranquillity.

The Editor-in-Chief of the *Corriera della Sera* was not a simple member of Parliament—he was a power. On account of the great popularity of his paper he had more influence than the whole Chamber together. Mussolini had to answer this speech, and the reply he gave in the Senate was in the calm tone due to the seriousness of the House of Lords. Yet it was a resolute answer.

—"I wonder greatly at the faith of Senator Albertini in pure Liberalism; but he must allow me to remind him that Liberalism was also not born of peace and tranquillity—Liberalism was the offspring of two great revolutions. He must allow me to remind him that Constitutionalism in England and Liberalism in France—in a word, all those principles and ideas which are included under the name of nineteenth-century Liberalism, originated in a great revolutionary movement of the peoples. And without this revolutionary movement the honoured Senator would not to-day have been able to recite the elegy of pure Liberalism.

—"How is this internal crisis to be solved? By worn-out and exhausted political parties? Never. But one cannot turn loose a blind and destructive revolution upon the country. Therefore I have restrained Fascism within proper limits. I have not gone a step beyond these limits, and I have not allowed myself to be intoxicated by victory.

—"Who could have prevented the proclamation of a dictatorship? Who could have prevented me from dissolving Parliament? Who could have resisted a movement which

relied, not upon three hundred thousand voters, but upon three hundred thousand bayonets? No one.

—"I have always said that personal ambitions, interests, and sentiments must be subordinated to the highest good of the nation; and therefore I have directed Fascism along the lines of Constitutionalism. Considering this, I would ask whether my Government means anarchy and confusion?

—"According to Senator Albertini only pure Liberalism can save the nation. But what is pure Liberalism? If following the school of pure Liberalism means that in the name of political freedom we should allow a few hundred ignorant criminals or fanatics to ruin, according to their own fancy, a country with forty million people, then I must decline even to contemplate the idea of being a Liberal.

—"I have no fetishes, but I always act as the interests of the country demand. I want the discipline of the nation no longer to be an empty word. I want to draw a distinction between those who work for their country and are ready for any sacrifice, and those whose aims are the exact opposite of all this.

—"Because of the neglect of these principles the Government of yesterday perished. The State cannot play the rôle of a distinguished foreigner, lolling in the comfortable arm-chair of Liberalism, and looking on at the terrible drama, where vast moral issues and the fundamental social principles of the nation are at stake. For this very reason no one can say of our national policy that it is reactionary.

—"But I am not afraid of words. If it were necessary, I would proclaim myself to-morrow the leader of the reactionaries. In my eyes the whole political and journalistic terminology—Right Wing, Left Wing, Conservatism, Aristocracy, Democracy—is so much useless verbiage.

—"Empty words, which formerly expressed something, but now the time has come for them to disappear.

—"I shall not adopt a policy against the proletariat, and this, not in the interests of a class, but of the nation. We do not want to suppress the proletariat, we do not want to drive them from the possession of a quiet and honest livelihood. On the contrary we want to raise them both mentally and materially, but not because we think that

the masses will be able to produce the prevailing and ruling type of a future civilization. This thought we leave to the well-paid prophets, who proclaim this mysterious religion. The reason for which we strive to promote the welfare of the proletariat is connected with the general interest of the whole country. One cannot create a united, quiet, and peaceful nation if twenty million workers are deprived of the proper means of livelihood.

—"If the nation, as I hope and wish, becomes industrious and disciplined, then our aims will be attained."

Order, work, discipline? The greater part of the members of the Chamber and Senate stared at this young fellow as at some exotic foreigner who had fallen down into their ranks from another planet. The words he proclaimed were beautiful and enticing, but Parliaments are the very places for knowing best the inner value of words.

Words? The first administrative disposition of the new Prime Minister was to order in every ministry the most exact observance of the full working hours. "The man who comes late, or goes away before his time, will be dismissed." In the Ministerial offices everybody was smiling over it. How often had such orders been issued before!

The head of one of the departments was just hurrying away, naturally before the time, as usual. On the stairs he butted into a young man in a grey suit who was springing up the steps. The high official growled at him:

—"Cannot you take care? What are you rushing about here for? Who are you?"

—"And who are you?"

—"I am X. Y., head of the ministerial department N."

—"A Government official? How dare you leave the Government premises before the regulation time?"

—"What has that got to do with you? Who are you?"

—"I am Mussolini. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Present yourself at the Prime Minister's office to-morrow."

The high official, who till now had only seen the leader of the Fascisti at a distance, at the head of his blackshirts, had at the first moment not recognized the young man in a grey morning suit, springing up the steps with amazing swiftness. The next day everybody knew the story, and the whole capital was laughing over it.

And the Chamber? The Senate? For a time they looked

on at this new régime, at this sudden outburst of youth; they listened to the strong and decided words, they glanced at the three hundred thousand bayonets, and then—they voted Plenipotentiary Power.

What were the first measures of the plenipotentiary Prime Minister? He gave an order that religious instruction should be obligatory in the schools; the democratic and Freemason Governments having abolished it. He forbade all movements directed against the Church, and he put the Catholic religion under State protection. Before he had got into power a Papal Encyclical had proclaimed that the Vatican did not identify itself with the People's Party because they were in competition with the socialists. Now that by his first measures he had undertaken the protection of the Catholic Church, the People's Party ceased to have any significance, and the Church could no longer maintain in regard to him that policy of complete isolation which it had pursued under the Freemason Governments.

Was there to be peace between the Vatican and the Quirinal?

He was still far from that, but it was coming nearer from year to year.

For the genius of Mussolini could not fail to perceive the miraculous and eternal power radiating from the mystical splendour of the Papacy, and the rebellious Pagan Caesar had to prostrate himself before the mighty Church of Saint Peter.

CHAPTER VI

SPEEDING UP

THE two introductory speeches which fell from the lips of the Prime Minister had a tranquillizing effect on the public, which now awaited with the greatest expectancy the further work of the Government.

“Revolution is not chaos, it is not disorder, nor is it the stoppage of active work and the tearing asunder of the ties of social life, as the idiotic leaders of Bolshevism proclaim. Revolution is of a higher order; it is a higher development of the political, economic, social, and moral system. Only when it represents this principle has it a transforming force; otherwise it degenerates into reaction or vandalism. Revolution is discipline—a discipline which takes the place of an older, slacker order. Revolution is power—a power supplanting a rule which has become weakened and outworn.”

The new Government, having shown by its first measures a firm determination to uphold order, set to work with feverish haste at the reconstruction of the country. The two weeks which elapsed between their coming into office and the voting of plenipotentiary power by the two Chambers were employed by Mussolini in studying, down to the minutest details, the economic situation of the country. He accepted older plans which were suitable for his schemes of reconstruction, and he worked out new ones, where the old were insufficient for his purpose. During the first two weeks the Government held thirty-two Cabinet meetings—more than two a day. Most of these meetings were protracted till late into the night. Sometimes one or other of the Ministers or Secretaries of State had a rest, but the Prime Minister presided at every meeting.

—“For goodness’ sake take some rest, sir,” his friends implored him.

—“It is quite unnecessary. My reserve of energy is still untapped.”

—“But you cannot go on thus—without resting a single hour, a single minute. Your nerves will be worn out.”

—"I cannot rest. The situation is critical; it will take two or three weeks before we can get the more important measures carried through. Then we shall be able to rest—perhaps; till then it is out of the question."

—"Human strength has its limits, even yours has."

—"It does not matter about me. The doctor has no right to be tired if he has to perform an operation."

By the time the two Chambers had voted plenipotentiary power the new Government was ready with all its measures. Before the economic questions could be dealt with they had to solve a still more difficult problem—that of the Fascist army. This armed force of a hundred and sixty thousand men had not blindly followed their leader in order to be left hopelessly stranded and again dispersed all over the Peninsula; nor had their leader placed himself at the head of his old comrades from the Front that when he got into power he might desert them, leaving this great active force without bread and without occupation. He was not a Miltiades, who after the victory would allow his army to be scattered to the four winds, but a Caesar, who would hold them together for further service. He organized in two weeks the National Guards: the *Milizia Nazionale*, and thus he solved at one *coup* the question of finding employment for the ex-service men (that greatest problem of all post-war countries). The blackshirt legions passed over into State service, and got, as soldiers, their payment from the State. They could shelter themselves in these secure positions till production should increase to such an extent that everybody who wanted to should be able to find his place in civil life. This Fascist army, which had preserved, even as a National Guard, its Romanized organization, was to become the strongest support of the new Government through all the stormy years of the future.

To the legions of the National Guard Mussolini admitted also the so-called blueshirts, the soldiers of the Federzoni-Corradini Party, because gradually a complete fusion had taken place between this party and the immeasurably stronger camp of the Fascists. By this union Mussolini conquered for himself a great part of the *intelligentsia*, and among the leaders of the blueshirts he found excellent and talented collaborators—as, for instance, Federzoni,

whose authority in the Government increased to such an extent that he finally became the right-hand of the Prime Minister.

After having solved the gigantic problem of providing for the ex-service men, Mussolini, as plenipotentiary Prime Minister of Italy, began with feverish haste to bring order into the economic life of the country. When his Government got into power the situation was on the verge of catastrophe. Every procrastination meant the danger of complete collapse. The failure of the Banca Italiana di Sconto, and the bankruptcy of the connected undertakings, threatened millions of people with complete ruin, and thus it contained the possibility of an immense financial crash. In the shortest time imaginable Mussolini's Government had succeeded in reconstructing the Banca di Sconto in a new form, under the name of Banca Nazionale di Credito. The most solid Italian financial concerns—the Credito Italiano and the rising Banca Commerciale Italiana—came to the help of their ruined colleague, and thus the danger, which threatened the whole country and the invested capital of several million people, was averted.

The matter of the Banca di Sconto was, however, but a small affair compared with the danger which threatened the situation of the Exchequer, as well as that of national production. During the war, and in the general confusion of post-war times, the Government could not even dream of re-establishing the balance of State finances. In the autumn of 1922 the Damocles sword of alarmingly increased debts hovered over the head of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The deficit amounted to forty-three milliard lire, and the Ministers of Finance wondered how they would ever get clear of this frightful debt. In the general disorder, taxes were not paid at all, partly because the public was completely exhausted, partly because the few who could have paid would slip out of declaring their incomes. The direct taxes, for instance, which in 1921 had produced an income of 1,735 million, in 1922 had already fallen to 967 millions, nearly half the amount; and this single example clearly showed that the sources of income were running dry. The balance-sheets of the State undertakings showed a frightful deficit—a fact which greatly redounded to the glory of bureaucracy! The State had to make good a deficit of

hundreds of millions on the telephone, telegraph and postal services, and more than a million of lire on the railway.

Besides this the greatest confusion reigned in the system of taxation, which, in fact, did not work at all. The perpetually changing Governments of the war and post-war times had lived only from hand to mouth; and thus they levied new kinds of taxes, as their fancy, or the momentary exigencies of the Exchequer, required. In 1922 there were ten sorts of income tax; and besides these, the population of Italy had also to pay taxes of at least fifty different kinds. That is to say, they were only *supposed* to pay, because the clumsy and complicated system of tax collection and the possibility of passive resistance against the weakened power of the State nullified in advance every increase of the revenue of the Exchequer. The State lived by raising loans, and thus it became incredibly encumbered with debts. This example was followed by the different municipalities, and by several provinces, where, moreover, the unchecked assessment of the additional taxes for the towns and districts had hopelessly complicated the situation.

Even politically—although liberated for half a century—Young Italy could not be united before the coming into power of the Fascismus, and economically as well as financially she stood almost in the same position as in the years of her dismemberment. The different departments were beginning already to understand that, politically, they belonged to the united Italian State, although during twenty centuries their mentality had got used to living independently of each other, even to quarrelling and fighting among themselves. But financially they still watched with intense jealousy over their own particular interests. The municipalities and provinces extracted the additional taxes to an incredible extent, and at their frontiers they put such duties on the articles of production and consumption as to stop the healthy circulation of commerce. The conditions, indeed, were those of the middle ages. The municipalities and provinces barred themselves in, as independent Customs territories, behind the Chinese walls of their own prohibitive tariffs. Having preserved their own local interests, they did not care a scrap whether or not this attitude brought a catastrophe upon the country. Under such conditions commerce could

not flourish; on the contrary, it stood on the verge of ruin, because, besides the special tariff system of the different provinces, it was also ground down by the State, which made every healthy movement impossible, both by its claim for exaggerated taxes and by its strange determination to uphold the exceptional measures, protections, and privileges of war-time. The farmers groaned under the maximum prices, tradesmen could nowhere get credit, and wholesale trade suffered frightfully on account of the strikes and riots. Hitherto the Government had not been able to touch this problem. The communistic agitations, the ceaseless riots and crises, had always prevented them from starting upon the radical settlement of the question. But even when they initiated some partial measure, it resulted in nothing, being lost in the conflict of a thousand opposing interests, and in the corrupt and bureaucratic methods of the Parliamentary committees.

The Mussolini Government set to work with lightning speed upon this burning problem. It was hampered by no system, by no class, and by no group. It could face openly and frankly the problems looming up before it, and it could be certain that no force would be able to trip up the measures passed. The Parliament had completely withdrawn from the work of financial reorganization, because it would have driven Mussolini mad to submit the solution of these pressing problems to Parliamentary committees and sub-committees.

The man who had been brought up in a world of factories and machines drove ruthlessly away from his suite every politician and every bureaucrat. With regard to the improvement of the financial situation, he would only negotiate with experts; and concerning the measures to encourage the economic rise of the country, he only asked the representatives of the respective interests.

His Minister of Finance, Alberto di Stefani, was one of the most clear-headed politicians of new Italy; in him deep knowledge was united with practical sense and resolute energy. The new Chancellor of the Exchequer made it his first task to balance the State finances, and to bring order into the complete chaos of useless taxation which was understood by no one. The financial policy—proclaimed the first Fascist head of the Exchequer—which aims at

preventing the accumulation of capital, is a policy of fools. One has to diminish the expenditure of the State and to increase the revenue, but the problem of taxation can be solved only by the complete simplification of the whole system. The first consequence of this conception was that the Fascist Government, by imposing heavy penalties, made impossible once for all the concealment and false declaration of income.

Within two months the number of taxpayers increased by two millions—all people who had hitherto cheerfully carried on their illicit practices. The second result of the financial reform was the regulation of the chaos in the taxation system—a thing attained by the rapidly issued measures of a few short months. Instead of the ten direct taxes De Stefani introduced but four; he also greatly simplified the other taxes, and abolished almost entirely those of war times.

Within a year the Fascist system of taxation had been completely perfected. It was based on but a few taxes, but these were very heavy, of vast extent and quick administration.

Side by side with these violent measures proceeded also orders for retrenchment. The Government abolished Ministries, did away with hundreds of positions, gave the telephone into private hands, and even the State railway could only be saved from private administration by a severe programme of reforms. The red pencil worked mercilessly among the items of the Budget, and it was owing to this that in one and a half years the expenses of the State finances were diminished two thousand twenty-nine millions of lire. With the same agility Mussolini's Government flung itself upon the great problem of unemployment. Italy had only one alternative before her—proclaimed the Prime Minister from Rome—work or death. The dreadful dullness of the preceding years of unemployment sufficed for everybody to feel the charm of the new slogan; and the bold *élan* of the young Prime Minister, joined to his ceaseless encouragements, lashed the people to work. The financial problem of the State was no longer *terra incognita*, nobody now yawned during the speeches of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and nobody turned over, with a bored gesture, the pages of his

newspaper, for the simplified machinery of State finances had become clearly comprehensible to everybody, and the importance of financial and economic problems was being demonstrated throughout the whole country by brochures written in a plain and simple style. This was a great advance, for people began to trust the State, and they began to perceive the enormous importance of work and sacrifice. In the factories, which had hitherto been crippled by strikes, work sprang up again with effervescing energy. The ploughs flashed over the soil which had been threatened with communization, and commerce once more emerged into the open.

Above the city, in the Prime Minister's residence, the lights shone till dawn. Throughout the Peninsula the New Man radiated with magic force all the condensed energy of triumphant youth. In contradistinction to the deeply-rooted habits of other dictators, his Ministers and Secretaries of State were not merely dull executors of his will, but first-class experts in their business, and of brilliant practical capacity. This Government held its finger perpetually upon the pulse of life, and immediate measures followed always upon the recognition of problems needing solution. The swift decrees and orders pumped fresh air—as it were—into the weakened economic system of Italy.

It is not worth while for the farmers to produce because of the maximum prices? The Government does away with maximum prices. The merchants complain because of the privileges and the distributing centres of war-times? They all disappear at one stroke of the pen. Something is the matter with the Customs? The duty on sugar is lowered from 7 to 2 per cent., the consumption taxes on bread and food are diminished, etc. The municipalities and provinces are collecting additional taxes? Do they put up hindrances to free trade and free commerce? A new decree, and the maximum value of additional taxes for municipalities, is regulated. The provinces lament—What then are they to live on? Henceforth they may assess taxes upon the hotels, according to the influx of foreigners. Is there a need for new houses? Italy must build them. Do the landlords pretend that it is not worth while? For twenty-five years every newly built house will be exempt from taxes, and this will make it worth while. The production of small estates does

not come up to the claim of modern times? The Government inaugurates a school for travelling teachers of economy, and the agricultural credit banks are formed. Is there unemployment? In Genoa, in Livorno, in Naples, in Venice, in Cagliari and in Bari they start the enlargement of the harbours. Sicily receives two hundred millions of lire for road-making, and Calabria three hundred. Is there not enough fuel? The exploitation of water power must be increased, that the white fuel may supplant the black, which nature has refused to Italy. Everywhere swift decided measures, the immediate recognition of the situation and immediate action.

This is a new Italy; there is no Parliamentary committee, no interpellation, no political irresolution, and there is no bureaucracy. The whole administration is simplified to the uttermost.

—"Look at the broadcast, the telephone, the wireless, and all this stormy energy of a rising technical life. Are there still people who consider the Ministries to be store-houses of official documents, people who do not perceive that they cannot dawdle longer over drawing up a Ministerial act than over making a motor-car? Are there still such people?"

"Clear out these mummies!"

"The Government," proclaims Mussolini, "is here to speed up production, and to prevent all stagnation in the national life. Hitherto bureaucracy has dozed quietly over the problems so badly needing solution; to-day we have to solve every question with the greatest swiftness possible. If in the country everybody were able to be in harmony with the ceaselessly pulsating rhythm of force, will, and vigour, then we should triumph over this crisis. I await with joy this awakening. The example of Ancient Rome stands before the eyes of all of us, but the Colosseum, the Forum Romanum, only proclaim the glory of the past, and we have to found the glory of to-day and of to-morrow. We are the generation which plans and creates. We want by our work, our discipline, and our abilities to achieve the greatness of the nation, which means quiet living for every productive element and extirpation for every parasite."

CHAPTER VII

IN SWITZERLAND—AFTER TWENTY YEARS

THE European States which, for centuries, had treated Italy as a vast curiosity shop, where the greater part of the population lived on curious strangers, looked at each other amazed. At first the diplomats of the great Powers smiled discreetly; they could not understand the bold *élan* of the young Prime Minister, and above all, they could not understand his wish that, henceforth, Italy should be a country concerned in every important problem in Europe. Since the Peace Treaty this right had only been granted to the French Prime Minister and to the leader of the English Foreign Office. Every international question of any importance—the Turkish war of independence, the Mohammedan movements, the increasing Russian propaganda, the German reparations—was referred to the statesmen of these two Powers, for America had completely withdrawn, and Italy did not count, because of her perpetual Government crises and internal troubles.

Now, before the Lausanne Conference, Lord Curzon still wanted to enter into negotiations with Poincaré, the French Prime Minister, alone. But his quick-sighted French colleague perceived the seriousness of the claims of the new Italian Prime Minister, and thus he sent a dispatch to London, stating that he did not consider any introductory negotiations would be successful if the leader of Italy were not to take part in them.

The news of this telegram leaked out, and provoked immense enthusiasm in Italy, for the young, liberated, national forces were not at all inclined to play second fiddle in the great concert of European politics.

One prolonged roar of enthusiasm accompanied the special train as it rushed with the young Prime Minister of the new Italy towards the Swiss frontier. Besides the jealousy of the Foreign Powers, Mussolini's journey to Switzerland had also another rather humorous obstacle

Twenty years before, Switzerland had expelled for good, from all the Cantons of the Confederation, a vagabond

named Benito Mussolini, who, by chance, had become identified with that Benito Mussolini, the Prime Minister of Italy, now starting for Switzerland to meet the leading statesmen of Great Britain and France. It may be imagined with what amazing haste the good Swiss fished out this old order from their archives and erased it from the Statute Book. Thus no further obstacle prevented Mussolini's entering Swiss territory.

Twenty years before, with one florin in his pocket, he had come to Switzerland, where the greatest misery and the most terrible struggles awaited him. Now he came by special train, and the Prime Ministers of England and France awaited his arrival. Twenty years before, hungry and ragged, he had wandered about in the streets and planned attempts at suicide. Now he was received everywhere with honour and acclamation; the authorities, who at that time had persecuted him, now paid their humble respects to the distinguished visitor. Twenty years before, he had proclaimed practical anarchy, and had been the friend of Russian revolutionists; now he was the man to abolish all disorder and anarchy, the man to break down Bolshevism: the man of destiny in European history who had stayed the onrush of the Asiatic wave over Europe. One wonders what the old English peer and the ex-President and Prime Minister of the French Republic felt when they met the New Man, whose stormy past was known to everyone, and whose powerful personality swept across the stale and time-worn principles and theories as with the breath of another world.

"M. Poincaré, Signor Mussolini, and Lord Curzon held to-day their first conference, at which it was unanimously agreed that France, Italy, and Great Britain desire to solve all the problems which formed the subject of the Lausanne Conference in the most perfect harmony and friendship."

So ran the official report, announcing that Italy had entered the sphere of world politics and claimed for herself the same rights as the other Great Powers. The old Italy, which had played an insignificant rôle among the Great Powers, had ceased to exist, and in its place had arisen the

new Italy, which in the coming years was to become one of the most active and turbulent factors in world politics.

This official report naturally raised the most intense enthusiasm in Italy. The newspapers, in columns of type, dwelt upon the importance of the Lausanne Conference; and a flood of congratulatory telegrams poured down upon the Prime Minister during his stay in Switzerland. Meanwhile, in the elegant and luxurious Swiss hotel—before which he had once stood hungry and starving—the young leader of Italy received the visits of the foreign diplomats and of his old acquaintances, who tried every means in their power to come into his presence. He received also the head of the Lausanne police, who officially presented himself to inquire whether he was satisfied with the measures taken to ensure his personal safety.

Mussolini smiled courteously as he listened to the speech. Through the window could be seen the bridge under which he had formerly been arrested.

—"I am quite satisfied, sir. The Swiss police have always done their duty irreproachably. Do you remember?"—he said smiling, and suddenly drawing back the curtain from the window, he pointed to the lonely bridge—"Twenty years ago, your police arrested me there. . . ."

The chief of the police did not move a muscle of his clean-shaven face. The chief of the police was a philosopher and a diplomat. He answered smoothly and softly:

—"C'est la vie, Monsieur le Président."

CHAPTER VIII

CAPITAL AND LABOUR

IN contradistinction to the swift measures by which Mussolini opened the sluices of economic life the regulation of political and social questions was touched upon only with the utmost precaution. The Parliament, which he had intimidated by his first speech, seeing the sudden boom in production and labour, hardly interfered with the Governmental measures. The Opposition perceived that the country was too much interested in work and production to find fault with the political situation. Besides, the Mussolini Government was a Coalition, and among its members there were not only Fascists, but also Conservatives, Democrats, and some representatives of the People's Party. Thus every guarantee was given that, except the economic reforms, no question should arise for some time which would provoke a radical change in the political structure of the country. Mussolini governed by decrees, and these decrees were only embodied in the legislature when they proved successful in practice. Later on, this became the system of Fascist legislation.

In the first period of his régime Mussolini treated the Opposition with striking loyalty, but his excellent tactical ability did not lose the opportunity of letting people see that the tranquillity and order, together with the stimulation of production, were due to *his* Government.

He went from town to town, undertaking one tour after another; he was to be seen everywhere, always inspiring the masses with enthusiasm, his army constantly increasing. Fascist syndicalism became a great source of attraction to Labour, which, after being deceived by the phantasms of the communistic ideology, now stared at the heralds of the new faith with widely opened eyes.

The new faith denied that the future of Labour was inseparably bound up with the destruction of Capital. On the contrary, Capital was to be made stronger and more powerful, for only thus would it be possible to ensure a quiet life, fair wages, and proper housing to the labourers.

But if Capital were to become stronger and more powerful would it not become still more indifferent to the

working classes, and in the consciousness of its power thrust them down into still greater misery? According to the new faith this could not happen in a Fascist State; for, as the Fascio, on the one hand, would not allow Labour, under the influence of socialist and communist agitators, to attempt to destroy Capital—which was an integral part of the nation—so, on the other hand, neither would they allow Capital to suppress Labour, which was another important part of national production. According to the new faith the interest of Labour is bound up with the interest of the nation, for when the nation is strong, then Labour is strong also, and when the nation weakens, then Labour also is threatened with suppression. Class war could be only a weapon and a slogan of Labour as long as the Liberal State system maintained the principle of *laissez-faire* with regard to the productive forces of the country, and so long as it had no inclination to interfere in this conflict, or, rather, so long as it stood on the side of Capital. The moment that the Fascist Government, considering Labour, technical skill and Capital to be of equal importance as productive forces, began to keep a sharp look out that neither the one nor the other should get the upper hand at the expense of its rival—at that moment the motive for class war ceased, and its place was taken by the great ideal proclaimed by Fascism: the co-operation of the classes.

In the enormous technical and economic development of the twentieth century, in its dreadful struggle for life, only a highly industrious and conscientious nation was able to fight out its future; and this strong nation could only be created by the co-operation of the classes. Therefore Labour should not seek its prosperity in the union of the proletariat of the whole world, but instead of distant and fantastic aims it should deal with the realities of life, and contribute with its entire force to the fortification of a political system, which no longer considered the nation as an empty notion and the State as the monopoly of the Capitalists.

"Believe me," said Mussolini to the workmen, "I am always delighted when I can be with you in the workshops, for then I always feel as if I were recalling my past youth. I do not come from an aristocratic or county family; my ancestors were peasants, and my father a smith—I grew

up in his simple workshop. Twenty years ago I was earning my living by the work of my two hands: I was an artisan, a mason. Is it possible that when every fibre in my memory binds me to the working class I should want to betray those I am descended from? No; I am only fighting against the people who want to ensnare you, and to thrust you down into misery by their false and faulty ideas."

Is it to be wondered at that the greater part of the workmen, deceived by their communistic leaders, should be inclined to believe the teachings of the new faith? Mussolini did not proclaim class war, but he made Parliament vote for the eight-hour working day, and for the obligatory insurances so long expected. Supposing this man be not really a traitor, as the leaders of the Labour Party proclaim! For is he not one of themselves, was not he, too, formerly a simple workman? Would it be possible for him to betray his own brothers? Thus meditated the majority of the Italian working class, and the energetic leaders of the Fascist workmen syndicates enlisted ever more adherents to the new flag. The new faith had a specially strong influence upon the younger section of the working class. No Marxist doctrine could succeed in threshing out from the soul of the young Italian workers the qualities of the Italian race: the quick-mindedness, the nimble activity, and the desire for the appreciation of individual work. To these youths the teaching which proclaimed that you were a man, a personality, and that you had to strive to be more than others, had naturally a stronger appeal than a teaching which tried to prove that you were nothing, that you only counted when you melted into a great collectivity, where only numbers stood for the one, and only the great unanimous and uniform masses meant the whole—the Man.

Was it chance that the younger generation of Italian workers should have begun to feel that, instead of the desert of proletarian internationalism, it belonged to a country which, despite its thousand years' history, was still young, fresh, and capable of development?

"Capital must not think," proclaimed the Prime Minister, "that we shall grant it any special privileges. True, we support the development of Capital, but not in order to strengthen international Capitalism; only in order

to enable Italian Capital to ensure a fair life to Italian Labour. Capital is just as much an integral part of the nation as Labour, and as we have restrained the excesses of the Labour movement, just so shall we restrain, if necessary, the anti-social movements of Capital."

Yet he would give some privileges to Capital. But when? When it was a question of forming a new undertaking, or expanding an old one, thus producing new and enlarged possibilities of work. Then the Government would grant it exemption from duty, and other advantages, in order to promote the development of the undertaking. But not gratis. Business is business. The undertaking received the privilege, but only if it gave as compensation a certain amount of its stock to the Exchequer. Thus the State became a shareholder in private undertakings, and ensured for itself the right of control as well as doing good business.

Every word, every thought of Mussolini, was new and different from what had been proclaimed and practised hitherto; nevertheless, by the sincerity of his tones, he attracted the representatives of all the different professions. To the engineers he said that their technical mentality stood nearest to his own planning and creative nature; the merchants and business men he urged to look for new markets. The navigation societies he spurred on to build new steamers: "Vivere non est necesse, navigare necesse est." He brought new discipline into the ranks of the Army and Navy, and he did everything technically to equip them in the best way possible: "Only beneath the shadow of our swords can we be secure." With the utmost energy he flung himself into the development of aero-technics; for this, according to him, would be of the most decisive importance in the future. But with the same deep interest he also turned towards artistic and literary movements. "To-day, in this age of machines," he said at the opening of an exhibition, "we cannot govern a State if we disregard art and artists. Art is the most perfect expression of the human soul. It began with the history of humanity, and it will not come to an end till the last day. Art means individual prominence and talent, and the State has one duty with regard to it: to produce such conditions of life for artists that their wonderful qualities may flourish in their full splendour."

Mussolini the artist, to whom his violin had been his

only friend, could not speak otherwise, but even Mussolini the politician could take no other ground, for he proclaimed the solidarity of principles, classes, and professions to be the fundamental condition of national life. He knew very well that when productive work was only at its very beginning, when he had to demand from everybody renunciation and sacrifice, then he could not appraise too highly the powerful influence of words upon the human heart.

He was present at every event, whether it were the launching of a new aeroplane, the silver jubilee of a simple workman, the establishment of a new factory, the meeting of a Merchants' Association, or an assembly of artists. He appeared everywhere, inspired everyone, sparing neither of his favours and distinctions nor of congratulatory telegrams.

—"When a man works," said the Prime Minister, "then he will receive the acknowledgment of the State, be he a simple workman or a chairman of the greatest industrial concerns."

Life roared and seethed around him, but when his Ministerial colleagues congratulated him on his achievements he only answered:

"I do not want any congratulation, for I have not yet done anything. Our work up till now has only been the clearing away of the ruins. Now we are getting into the open, where our hands will no longer be tied."

Italy, head over ears in work, had not even time to pay heed to the importance of this saying. The enchanting force of youth swung over the country, lashing its rushing rhythm to ever-increasing swiftness.

"Go on, keep going on; stagnation is—death."

What about his family? Sometimes he did not see them for months. When he was nominated Prime Minister he left his brother Arnaldo in his place as Editor-in-Chief of the *Popolo d'Italia*. His wife and children remained at Milan in the old flat, among the old simple surroundings.

"I shall not bring them to Rome, for I have no desire to make a family cult of the Mussolini name.—One Mussolini is quite enough."

CHAPTER IX

CORFU

IN August 1923 Italy was suddenly alarmed by unexpected news. On the Greco-Albanian frontier an Italian colonel, the President of the Frontier Rectification Committee, had been killed, and according to statements at the trial the murder had been committed by Greeks.

Old Rome would have been satisfied with a suitable expression of regret—new Rome demanded complete satisfaction within twenty-four hours: viz. that Greek troops should salute the Italian flag, that the murderers should be executed, and that an immense compensation in gold should be given to the relatives of the victim.

Athens vacillated. It considered this method of satisfaction excessive, and it tried to slip out of it. But it had no time. On the 28th of August the Italian Fleet appeared at night before Corfu, and, disembarking seven thousand men, within a few hours occupied the island. . . .

The Greek garrison surrendered without a shot. Mussolini had sent this expedition, addressing the commander of the army of occupation with the words:

—"I give you seventy hours, and within that time you must occupy the whole island."

"Impossible."

"I require it."

For whole nights he sat in his office, and he received personally the radiograms arriving from Corfu. To the protestations of the Greek Government he replied:

—"Until Greece fulfils my demands I shall not move from Corfu, which, moreover, belonged formerly for a long time to Venice."

The rapid occupation of the island and the declaration of the Prime Minister suddenly embroiled the European situation. Such a situation was unparalleled. The fellow does not await the end of the diplomatic negotiations, but without any declaration of war he simply takes possession of an island, threatening, moreover, to remain there as long as he likes. The European Press was suddenly alarmed by the unexpected event. The papers wrote that the Greco-Italian incident was but a pretext for Mussolini to occupy

Corfu, and that by this method he intended to seize the more important points of the Mediterranean. The imagination of Europe was already agitated by the imminent danger of Italian Imperialism. The occupation of Corfu, however, was really nothing but a bold and energetic action which Mussolini could achieve quietly, for he knew very well that in the confusion of post-war Europe there was no country which would dare seriously to fight. A long diplomatic complication arose from this Corfu affair; England and France interfered, and the Greeks wished to appeal to the League of Nations.

—"This business," said Mussolini, "has nothing to do with the League of Nations; it is only a question of Italian national honour."

He threatened to leave the League of Nations if it tried to deprive Italy of the rightful defence of her honour.

By these energetic measures he received—after exciting diplomatic conflicts lasting for weeks—nearly everything he claimed. The whole of Europe drew a breath of relief when the Duce left the little island, which had almost become the cause of incalculable diplomatic complications.

CHAPTER X

BLOOD AND GOLD

As a result of the Corfu incident new tasks arose before the Prime Minister. The Opposition began to stir. There were some among its members who felt frightened at the new and bold methods inaugurated by Mussolini. It was a mere chance—said these men—that the occupation of Corfu had not led to a diplomatic rupture with England and the League of Nations, thus involving the possibility of fatal international complications.

Who knew—anxiety loomed up—whether this young Condottiere would not pitchfork Italy into a second, more dangerous adventure? Who knew—proclaimed another part of the Opposition—whether this man did not want to overthrow everything, the Throne, the parties, the rights of liberty? The man who was capable of this foolhardy adventure—said the haters of Fascism—would also be capable of the most absurd undertakings. Everything was in his hand; Parliament had given him plenipotentiary power, he was backed by the Fascist militia, which obeyed him alone, for the Duce did not make his soldiers take an oath even to the King. At first these voices of anxiety and hatred arose only here and there, but that was enough to upset thoroughly the young Fascists. What?—they cried indignantly. We have saved Italy, and here are these mummies wanting to rise again? We have been silent up to now, we quietly suffered that the Duce should not demand revenge, when in the first moments of his Government the communists assassinated Cassalini, the young Fascist M.P.; we withdrew without a word, leaving the field to the Coalition Government. We rushed to work on the land, in the factories, offices, and workshops, and now is it *us* they want to drive out?

—Never!

Farinacci, the leader of the Cremona division, was at the head of the dissatisfied Fascists. He proclaimed that there had been enough of indulgence and of a Coalition Government. Fascism had proved its ability to govern, therefore the time had come for it to take the power entirely into its hands. There had been enough beating about the bush.

The politicians must declare if they were with the Fascists or against them. He who was not on their side with his whole heart and soul was against them, and one could not negotiate with an enemy—an enemy had to be annihilated. In the overheated and excited general mood the Italian youth gave ear to this speech, and began again to use its old arm—the truncheon.

Mussolini saw clearly that danger was approaching him from two directions. In Parliament he was driven into a corner by the Opposition, and in the Fascist Party he was pressed hard by the intransigent section.

To such a clear head as Mussolini's it was not doubtful, even for a moment, that the simplest solution would be, either to make impossible the attacks of the Opposition or to break down the extreme right of his own party; in a word, either to swing back the weight of political life into Parliament or completely to withdraw from the Chamber. But he saw nothing before him but his aim: the roaring factories, the gigantic, newly built steamers, the electric locomotives and railway engines, the increasing number of artificial reservoirs, which kept on constantly augmenting the electrical output of the country. He knew what importance tranquillity had upon the process of economic life, and therefore he decided rather to maintain the actual political situation than by any kind of change to overthrow the financial conditions.

A terrible, nerve-shattering struggle began in the life of the Prime Minister; all his efforts were directed to suppress—in favour of productive work—every political conflict. He had to face the Parliamentary Opposition, which had now fully regained its voice, and he had to deal with the extreme right of his party, which considered that no concession was allowable.

—"The Opposition says"—he retorted to an attack—"that my power does not rest on public opinion but on force. The basis of every Government is force; the State cannot be supported by words. But force can only exist when based on public opinion. There is no force which does not spring from public opinion, and public opinion would be worth nothing if it did not rely on force. They ask me what my programme is? I want to govern Italy. Do they think that this is such a simple thing? To govern implies

fearful exertion, to govern means to remain at work from dawn to night, to see before one every need of the nation, to feel in one's heart the throb of the whole country. They say that I am suppressing liberty. Liberty does not mean personal rights; it means duty. Liberty is one thing in peace, and another in war. It is one thing in wealth, and another in misery. The only thing I have done has been to strengthen the State and the laws."

With one hand thus did he defend himself against the Parliamentary attacks pouring down upon him, while with the other he had to direct his blows against his own party.

"You will never understand that I must concern myself about the position Italy shall occupy in the world, and not about your small desires and local interests. Don't you see that the Adriatic is but a tub of water scarcely large enough for us to wash our faces in? Don't you see that the new Italy has to carry on a policy of wider horizons? Don't you see that for world politics even the Mediterranean is but a small affair, that for this thing one wants oceans? Don't you understand that I cannot attend to great questions when the Fascist divisions of Gorgonzola or Parmazano are always wanting something different, when my whole energy has to be exhausted in dealing with microscopic provincial violence?"

Months passed in this ceaseless obstinate struggle. At the beginning of 1924 the mandate of the Chamber expired. Mussolini had not the slightest idea of spoiling everything by inaugurating some kind of dictator or directorship, and therefore he had the scripts written out for the new elections. The parties of the Left formed one block, and they went into the decisive conflict with a common list, against which Mussolini drew up another list, consisting of the Conservatives and Liberals of the Right; putting his name at the head of it and the name of Orlando second. After a red-hot election the national block triumphed, and the absolute majority of the Chamber passed over into Fascist hands. Thus Mussolini had no longer to bother about a Coalition Government.

At the first session the defeated block of the Left started a stormy offensive against the Prime Minister, accusing him of having created the Parliamentary majority of the Government by arbitrary departmental divisions, by the bayonets of the militia, and by the most ruthless terrorism.

He replied that the candidates of his party had received five million votes, and that by secret ballot five million men cannot be terrorized. They complained of terrorism? At the open session of the Parliament he read the names of the Fascists who had been assassinated by their political adversaries—for the most part by communists. It showed that the Fascists had eighteen dead and a hundred and forty-seven wounded during the electoral campaign. The communists had chiefly attacked the sentinels of the militia by night, but their hand had even reached France. Bonservizi, the leader of the Italian Fascists residing in France, had also been assassinated in Paris.

—"Having listened to these facts," said the Prime Minister, turning to the Opposition, "do you still maintain that the communist danger is over, and that the armed militia, the guarantee of order, must be dissolved?"

—"Yes," roared back the Opposition, "for if your men disappeared, if your despotism ceased, there would be no longer any communistic danger."

The Fascist Party retorted:

—"We have seen how you kept the communists in check when it was you who were in power. Have you already forgotten that under your Government the factories were communized away?"

It was in this stormy atmosphere that the new Parliament assembled. The news fell upon this excited mood like the bursting of a bomb: Matteotti, the socialist M.P., had been assassinated. This young M.P. had been one of the most aggressive members of the Opposition, and one of the strongest Parliamentary adversaries of Fascism. In June 1924, on a rainy Wednesday night, he had disappeared, and it was only after some days that they found—his corpse. He had been killed, and there was no doubt that the murder had been committed by Fascists.

If at this moment Mussolini had looked either to his Party or to the Opposition he must have been overwhelmed with despair. What would become of the Fascist Party if this sort of thing were to prevail among its members? And what would become of him if, in face of the outraged public opinion of the country, and the alarm of the foreign Press, he had to bear the odium of this crime? The foreign Press wrote columns about the frightful misdeed, and the Parliamentary Opposition, after a terrible and murderous

offensive, seceded from the Chamber, as in ancient times the discontented Roman people had seceded to Mount Aventinus. The murder stirred up muddy waters, and the name of Cesare Rossi, one of the intimate friends of the Prime Minister, got mixed up with the crime, whereupon the Opposition began to whisper the horrible insinuation that Mussolini himself knew of the murder.

He did not hesitate for a moment. Hitherto he had been at the head of the Home Office, now he suddenly resigned, and appointed as his successor Federzoni, who had formerly been the leader of the Nationalists, and thus was far removed from the extremist section of the Fascist Party. Filipelli, Cesare Rossi, and others suspected of the murder were arrested, and Mussolini declared that he would clear his party of all doubtful elements, and by severe measures restrain the disturbers of order. During the following weeks the energetic hand of Federzoni locked the prison doors upon more and more of the suspected, but the storm raised by the murder could not be easily quelled.

Every day the foreign Press wrote columns about the hidden motives of the murder; the place of the Opposition in Parliament now remained empty, but the Opposition Press, headed by the *Corriera della Sera* (the only Italian paper read abroad), after pouring a flood of abuse upon the Prime Minister, demanded the complete abolition of the whole régime.

—"Nobody can doubt the sincere horror of the Government at this crime," Mussolini declared in the Parliament. "I can say with truth what Talleyrand said when the Duke of Enghien was executed: This is not only a crime, it is a blunder. The whole nation recoils with the greatest horror from such an outrage. I am able to state that twenty-four hours after the discovery of the murder all those suspected had been already arrested, and the following days further arrests were made. Everyone on whom the faintest shadow of suspicion rested came into the hands of the authorities. The claim of justice is being ruthlessly carried out."

This murder shook the power of Mussolini to its foundations and a situation resulted where the Prime Minister had to face both the offensive of the Opposition Press and the internal revolt of his own Party. The Opposition demanded the abolition of revolutionary measures, the

disbanding of the militia, and re-establishment of the right of holding meetings and forming unions; while his own Party, agitated by the attitude of the Opposition, which made the whole Fascist Party responsible for the assassination of Matteotti, protested in the most energetic manner against every reconciliatory negotiation between the Prime Minister and the Opposition.

The Government made the militia take an oath to the King, and by this it averted the suspicion that the Duce would want to keep a separate army. But the Fascist Party would not even listen to any reports claiming that Mussolini wanted to make peace with the Opposition, and to form once more a Coalition Government. In December 1924 Farinacci, the leader of the extreme Right Wing, was elected general secretary, and so the road to reconciliation became completely barred.

"If His Majesty the King ordered me to withdraw I would resign at once, but when His Majesty, the *Corriera della Sera*, demands it, then I say: No. And if the Opposition wishes to remain on the Aventino, I will not be Menenius Agrippa to beg them to come back."

Thus, in January 1925 did Mussolini turn upon his adversaries. During the following years Fascism became rapidly separated from all other parties, and it became the supreme power in the political life of Italy.

By the beginning of the year 1925 the support of the various political parties was no longer a necessity for Mussolini, because he had completely succeeded in the reconstruction of the economic life of the country.

Those swift measures which had brought balance into the State finances and new force into production could not remain without effect. As the Prime Minister had now received plenipotentiary power to direct the economic life, and as the country had no longer to fear strikes, Government crises, the outvoting of proposals, and procrastination in the carrying out of measures, production could make itself independent of the ups and downs of politics.

Whilst for two and a half years the politicians had been doing nothing but indulge in fault-finding and abuse, the Duce, with the aid of Italian bankers, engineers, workers, and merchants, had built up a new Italy behind their backs.

Whilst the Opposition had been carrying on, in Press and Parliament, a merciless offensive against him, Mussolini had

created the Italian industry on a vast scale. Around Milan, Busto, Galarate, Turin, Trieste, and Prato thousands of factory chimneys vomited smoke, and in the enlarged harbours of Genoa, Naples, and Palermo new steamers were being constantly launched. As early as the beginning of 1925 cheap Italian articles, by means of the excellent commercial relations, reached the farthest parts of the world, and the engines of the Breda factory drove English engines out of Egypt. The Alfa-Romeo cars won the world championship, Italian textile articles were shipped to Japan, the Italian banks flung themselves upon South America, and within two years they got into their hands the most important industrial concerns of the Argentine and Brazil. The boom in production, the increase in export, and the opening of new markets enabled new factories and new undertakings to be established nearly every day. The number of unemployed diminished considerably, and building was carried on with an activity without precedent in the history of Italy.

Venice built up its great new industrial harbour, the shipping activity of Genoa surpassed that of Marseilles, and Milan began with the preparatory work of the greatest railway station in the world. Even in the neglected southern regions of Italy gigantic industrial concerns were formed. All beggars and mendicants disappeared. In the snow-covered Alps and among the crags of the Abruzzi men were at work digging out the valley and making artificial lakes and dams, whence the water could rush down to drive the turbines. In 1925 the total power at the various hydraulic stations exceeded five thousand million kilowatts, resulting in a yearly saving of coal which amounted to five million tons.

For two and a half years the Prime Minister toiled and struggled to this end; for two and a half years he quarrelled with Parties, Press, and Parliament. The means were manifold, the end but one: the economic revival of the country. And when, after two and a half years, his opponents spoke of blood, he could point to—gold: to the forest of factory chimneys and the whirring of machines, to the ever-growing shipping, to the assault of the world's markets by their industry and commerce—in short, to the new Italy, adding only:

—"It is *I* who have done it."

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST ATTEMPT

MILAN had not even had time to recover from its jubilation over the fourth anniversary of the Marcia su Roma when unexpectedly black news buzzed through the Arcade of Victor Emmanuel. In Rome an attempt had been made to assassinate Mussolini, but fortunately it had been discovered by the police. The young blackshirts swept down the streets in turbulent masses, loudly abusing the politicians and the Opposition Press. Revolvers were fired off between the glass walls of the Arcade, and foreigners, reading their papers quietly in the Café Biffi, could see through the windows a crowd of several hundreds of young blackshirts. They came on, shouting and threatening the premises of the greatest Opposition journal of Italy, the *Corriera della Sera*. All the shutters were immediately banged noisily down. But the furious crowd tried to break through them, in order to destroy the interior of the house. It was only a question of a few seconds when unexpectedly a young man appeared among the exasperated blackshirts. With both fists he worked his way through the mob. The moment he had reached the wall he suddenly stretched out his hands and faced the crowd, showing them the dark barrels of two revolvers. It was Mario Giampaoli, the General Secretary of the Milanese Fascists.

—"The Duce has ordered," his voice proclaimed shrilly, "that you should abstain from all disturbance and personal revenge. His will is law. I shall shoot down anyone who does not obey."

The crowd wilted. The young secretary pointed to an opposite window of the Arcade, whence was suspended a huge white placard which announced in enormous black letters:

"The malefactors will obtain their due punishment. Revenge will be executed by the State. I wish you to abstain from all disturbances of order.

"MUSSOLINI."

The letters radiated out with suggestive force the will

of the Prime Minister; and the tamed youths, though grumbling and growling, slowly dispersed homewards. In the streets the special editions had already appeared.

The attempt, wrote the papers, was planned by ex-Colonel Zamboni, a member of the Labour Party. He had trained a gun, with which he intended to kill the Prime Minister, from a window of one of the hotels opposite the Foreign Office. The police got hold of what the Colonel had prepared and arrested him before the execution of the attempt. According to evidence produced at the trial, there was good reason for suspecting Capello, a pensioned general, one of the leading members of the Freemasonic lodges.

Thus ran the newspaper reports, which during the following days excited the youth of Italy to new demonstrations. Is Zamboni a member of the Labour Party? Then the Socialist Press and Trade Unions must be destroyed. The *Avanti* defends itself by saying that Zamboni left the Labour Party months ago? This does not make any difference. Is Capello also a criminal? Who is this Capello? He was the man who lost the Battle of Carfeit. A leading member of the Freemasons. Then the Freemasonic lodges must also be destroyed.

Thus argued and thus agitated the Fascist youth, and the outbreak of its passions led to some amount of riot and destruction during the ensuing days. In many towns they set on fire the offices of the Freemasonic lodges, they wrecked the printing works of a few Opposition newspapers, and the local secretaries of the Fascist Party succeeded only after the greatest efforts in barring the way of personal revenge.

For almost a week the whole of Italy was boiling and seething with irritation. The Fascist Party could not be appeased until the Freemasonic lodges and socialist organizations were dissolved. Farinacci, the leading secretary of the Party, demanded even more severe reprisals, and a week afterwards the Chamber actually accepted the motion of the Home Secretary, Federzoni, with regard to the strengthening of the Fascist régime. According to the new law every town and department councillor was bound to take an oath of fidelity to the Fascist State, and no one could be elected for this post who was a member of any association of a "destructive character." Italian emigrants, if they

acted in foreign countries against the interests of the Italian State, could be deprived of their citizenship, their property might be confiscated, and they themselves debarred from entering into direct or indirect commercial relation with any Italian undertakings.

After this the Fascist Party calmed down again, and Mussolini began at last quietly to build up the Fascist State on a legal basis.

CHAPTER XII

THE FUNDAMENTS OF THE FASCIST STATE

MUSSOLINI was now spurred on by events to swifter movement. Economically the country was rejoicing in a boom; Italian industry carried the national tricolour triumphantly to all parts of the world; throughout the Peninsula people were hard at productive work, and thus Mussolini found that the time had come for his reforms in State administration.

From the first moment Mussolini's leading principle of State government had been—Decentralization. The Ministries, proclaimed the Duce, are not here to direct every common business, nor is it the task of the Ministers to issue personally every measure, because in that case they would be drowned in a sea of documents, individual requests, and complaints, and in this everyday trifling they would not be able to find any time for work on a larger scale. The Mussolini Government did not want to concentrate everything in its own hands, but it issued clear and unmistakable decrees, and it endowed the Ministerial high functionaries, the prefects, and the Royal Commissioners with full administrative power, proclaiming, at the same time, the principle of their full responsibility in its exercise. The heads of the provincial departments and of the towns, and the directors of country offices, were no longer obliged to turn to the Ministries on every occasion, and the head of the Ministerial departments had not to wait for weeks till the Minister could sign the mountains of Acts on his writing-table. Full scope, full responsibility. This was the leading principle of the Mussolini Government, and the officials, trained by these measures to independent thinking, thus completely adapted themselves to the rhythmic swing of economic life. This great administrative reform—the extirpation of bureaucracy—which, when previously brought into force by a decree, had proved so efficient in practical life, this reform now became law.

The authority of the prefects and mayors increased in

the country, as well as did the political power of the State. The leaders of the counties and towns were no longer mere intermediaries between the Central Government and the public, but executive powers with a full scope of action. Where the municipal councils had not a Fascist majority, the Government dissolved the municipalities and nominated instead Royal Commissioners. By annihilating the Opposition, the Government aimed at keeping the public from any political party conflicts, and at compelling it to occupy itself with technical and economic problems. Through the slow decline of political parties, the authority of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Labour, and Engineering increased considerably. In the city of Rome, where, in the municipality, the Freemasonic and democratic parties had always been in a majority, they abolished the office of elective Mayor, and the capital received a Governor nominated by the Ministerial Council. The Prime Minister took the title of "Head of the Government," and a law was passed that his Ministers should be, above all, responsible to him, whilst he was responsible to the King alone.

The Fascist camp was highly satisfied. The Higher Chamber accepted the Bills of the Government, and a few weeks later a fresh surprise was announced to the public. The organization of employers proclaimed that in the future they would only negotiate with the Fascist Labour Syndicates with regard to wages. The power of the socialist Trade Unions, which had monopolized the Italian Labour movements for thirty years, was broken by this finishing stroke.

The Press of the Opposition protested, and the official paper of the Labour Party, the *Avanti*, fought desperately.

And what about the public? The Fascists exulted with joy, and the others had no time to think over the importance of the new laws, for the Duce took care to provide another surprise, which suddenly turned the thoughts of the people in a completely different direction. Count Volpi, the Minister of Finance, went unexpectedly over to America, and there within a few days came to an agreement concerning the regulation of the war debts. Where France had not succeeded (a failure which obliged Caillaux, the Minister of Finance, to leave London with

empty hands), there Italy solved the question at one stroke. The value of the lira was again stabilized, and the delight of the country increased beyond measure. Was it a wonder if the public, which under other political régimes had only seen misery and decline, should gain more and more confidence in a Government which had proved that its power and trustworthiness were recognized as stable and reliable even by the greatest business men of America? Was it to be wondered at that, when after such a success Mussolini proclaimed that instead of the Exchequer the citizens were to undertake the repayment of the war debts, the whole Peninsula echoed with this proposal?

"Italy has forty million inhabitants," said the Prime Minister. "If everybody offers but one dollar to the country we have already repaid the first instalment of the American loan."

Within a week the sum required was already over-subscribed. The newspapers published daily the names of the subscribers, and everybody considered it his duty to figure in the list. The foreign politicians stared with amazement at the man who had awakened this enthusiastic spirit of sacrifice. They assailed him with questions, and the reporters embittered his life by their interviews. Once an English feminist called upon him. From behind her sparkling eye-glasses she made inquiries about women's suffrage.

—"I will grant it," smiled Mussolini. "Who can resist the desires of women? They are the most adorable creatures of God, and only for their sakes is it worth while to live."

The old spinster replied uneasily: "Your Excellency is indeed giving strange and original motives for the solution of political questions."

She went away indignant from the Prime Minister's residence, but at the first shop she bought—the photograph of the Duce.

It is true you cannot discuss Feminism with him, but somehow you feel inclined to forgive this crime.

He is so fresh, so young, so . . . jolly.

CHAPTER XIII

LABOUR TRIBUNALS

EVENTS now proceeded rapidly. On the 1st of December, 1925, Mussolini presented to the Chamber a Bill which aimed at solving social evils by an entirely new method.

The Fascist mentality, which, above all, seeks the national prosperity, cannot tolerate that either Capital or Labour should get the upper hand in order to weaken the other Party, for the outbreak of class war ends by lowering the productivity of the whole nation. According to the social policy of Fascism, the philosophy of Marx proceeds on entirely false lines, for it only examines the injustice in the distribution of goods, and it forgets that the distribution of goods is only the last process of production. Marxism—proclaims Mussolini—by its obstinate, scientific stubbornness, only seeks to do away with the effect—the unjust distribution of goods—but it pays no attention to the cause itself—to production. The social policy of Fascism ploughs deeper, and wishes to regulate production itself, in contradistinction to Marxism, which would destroy it. The Marxist conception has proved untenable. It does harm to Labour, for which production has the same vital interest as for Capital; and it is injurious to the whole national life, because in the reckless struggle of class policy it upsets the economic order of the country; it increases systematically class opposition, it ruins the union of interests necessary for the normal process of production, and by so doing it dries up the sources of enrichment.

—“Fascism,” writes Suardo, the Secretary of State, “considers the wealth and development of Capital necessary, proclaiming, at the same time, that it wishes to provide for Labour, and to raise its standard, in order to increase production.”

It was according to this social-political conception that the Bill presented to the Chamber tried to solve the great problem by the establishment of new institutions. The proposition placed in the first line the establishment of syndicates, supported and controlled by the State.

These syndicates were to be composed of both employers and workmen, and both were obliged to regulate the wages by a common agreement. The second part of the Bill treated of the establishment of Labour Tribunals, which were to be worked as a State judicial organ. If the employers and workmen could not come to an agreement on the question of wages, they had to apply to the duly appointed Labour Tribunal, which alone was authorized to give a decision.

In the whole country, besides each of the sixteen Courts of Appeal, they established a corresponding Labour Tribunal, its president being also that of the Court of Appeal, its members also judges of this Court, and its councillors two appointed representatives of the employers and workmen.

The Bill declared that by the establishment of this impartial Court, which would care for the interests of the opposing parties and affirm the truth on a judicial basis, the self-defence of the different social classes would become superfluous, and therefore both the strikes and also the dismissal of workmen would be forbidden in the future. Whoever did not recognize the decision of the Labour Tribunal, whether workman or employer, was to be punished by imprisonment, extending from one month to one year, and besides this, if a workman, he had to pay a fine of a hundred lire, and if an employer, a fine of five thousand lire. The leaders of any movement which aimed at refusing the judgment of the Labour Tribunal were threatened with a still more severe punishment.

According to the further clauses of the Bill, if the workmen were to start a strike instead of carrying their demands for higher wages before the Labour Tribunal, then each man was liable to a fine of one hundred to a thousand lire. But if the employers were not willing to recognize the collective agreements approved by the Tribunal, and persisted in dismissing their workmen or employés, then they were liable to a fine of ten thousand to a hundred thousand lire. With regard to public works the punishments were still more rigorous. In this case the strikers were to be punished with imprisonment, extending from six months to two years, and with suspension from work for three years. Every movement of the

employers which should aim at breaking the contract, every suspension of work and dismissal of workers, was to be punished still more heavily. The guilty leaders might even be removed from their posts.

The Parliament voted the Bill, and thus the Government succeeded in securing the tranquil progress of productive work. Meanwhile Italy was rejoicing at another piece of news: Captain De Pinedo, having started in his aeroplane from Rome, had, after flying across Persia, India, China, Japan, and Sumatra, reached Australia, whence he had flown back to the Italian capital. The daring pilot landed on the bank of the Tiber, where Mussolini himself received him at the head of the Government. Within twenty-four hours the captain was made a colonel, and for weeks Italy celebrated this triumph of technical science and of personal courage.

Technical science? Half a year later Nobile, in company with Amundsen, was to fly to the North Pole. About a year later Italy was to start with the construction of two mammoth steamers, which, merely by the employment of a new screw system, were to cross from Naples to New York in five days, reckoning upon a speed of seventy kilometres per hour.

Immense perspectives. But if somebody had asked the man who had called to life all this activity whether he felt satisfied with the results of his work hitherto, he would have received a firm negative as answer:

"I never feel contented with anything. Woe to the nation which is satisfied with itself."

CHAPTER XIV

"AVE CAESAR"

At the end of the year 1925 Mussolini saw no further obstacles before him. He had brought order into the economic and financial life of the country. The Liberal and Democratic Party could not return to power, for this would have meant for every Fascist the weakening of the power of the State and a fresh outbreak of class war. The Social-Democratic Trade Unions were dissolved and the majority of the Labour Party joined the camp of Mussolini, for here, instead of Utopian promises it received good wages and spacious, airy housing. The Opposition Press was unable to inflict any injury upon him because of the new Press law, and because the owners of the newspapers had nearly all turned round and had also joined his camp. The owners of the *Corriera della Sera* dismissed their Editor-in-Chief, Albertini, and so the attacks of this paper ceased. Mussolini himself had wisely taken advantage of the opportunity of a conflict between Farinacci and Federzoni. He caused Farinacci, the powerful General Secretary of the Party, to resign; by this trick he remained the only power and the only authority in his camp. By taking charge of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Fleet, these three Ministries passed into his hands, and the Militia, with its highly efficient armed legions, kept firm guard over public order. The cheerful, energetic genius of the New Man rose high over all.

Mussolini began the year 1926 by two different steps: one was the establishment of the Royal Italian Academy; the other, the legislation of the so-called Balilla order, which prescribed the organizing of the youth of Italy in a Fascist spirit. The establishment of the Academy was a long-standing desire of New Italy, which could not quietly contemplate the green suits of the forty immortals of Paris. According to the law Italy was to have sixty academicians, nominated by the King and receiving from the State a yearly honorarium of thirty-six thousand lire.

The other law dealt with the organizing of the youth

of Italy in a Fascistic spirit. The children were to enter a special organization—called Balilla—which had for its aim to inspire in every child, from his sixth year, national feeling and respect for the Fascist system. But besides this it also aimed at training them for military service. To-day you may already see these tiny soldiers everywhere, putting on their uniform with the joyous happiness of childhood: the black breeches, the black shirt, the tufted black cap, and the blue ribbon. There they march and there they sing with happy flushed cheeks throughout the Peninsula. The guards salute them as they pass down the streets, and the passers-by take off their hats to the tiny flags of the Balilla.

Whither does this army of children march, whither does this mysterious man lead them—this man, at the cards in whose hand no one can catch a glimpse? Strange things are taught to these children, bold and fresh words, the exact opposite of those on which their fathers had been brought up:

- Whose is the discipline?
- Ours.
- Whose is the duty?
- Ours.
- Whose are the work and the sacrifice?
- Ours.
- To whom will power and glory belong?
- To us.

Power and glory? This problem is not only stirring the souls of the children, but also the souls of the grown-up Italians. The industry of New Italy looks for fresh markets, and her enormously prolific population has not enough room on the Peninsula. The Italian emigrants would disperse all over the world, but on account of the quota restriction only a small fraction can enter America. Canada will not receive them, Australia is too far off, and South America does not offer a sufficiently secure living. Where shall they go? Where shall that enormous, daily increasing crowd, which almost overflows the frontiers, find an outlet? Formerly, in the weakened state of the country, they would not even have dared to dream

of new colonies. But now? Now they are strong, strenuous, and, what is more important, bold and young.

Whither does history point, whither had led the road from Ancient Rome, when the Peninsula became too narrow for its needs? Towards Carthage. The ruins of Carthage now lie black on the rich and fertile soil of Tunis—a soil for the greater part inhabited by Italians. And there lie the African coasts which once heard the footsteps of the Roman legions; there lie the islands of the Mediterranean where the torsos of ancient gods glimmer in the sunshine. There lies Corsica, there lies marvellous Nice, fertile Savoy. Who are living there? Italians. And who is the possessor of this great land, partly inhabited by Italians, and wholly desired by them? It is France—France whom in former days they loved—the Latin sister, who during the Peace Conference had ruthlessly cheated Italy of the colonial mandates. Whither does the path of history lead? Who was the second enemy of Ancient Rome?

Gaul.

Historical parallels are always tempting. Caesar also had broken into a declining, fractious, and exhausted Gaul, and annexed it to the Roman Empire. Could not the modern Caesar extort some concession, or perhaps a colony, from the weakened and fermenting Gaul of to-day?

What does France want with her immense colonial territories? Her population is constantly diminishing; thus there is none for whom to provide accommodation. Her internal conditions become more disturbed from year to year; she will not be able to maintain order in her colonies. The strongest army in the world belongs to her? Abd El Krim and the Druse chiefs have shown what the practical value of this faith is worth. On the other hand, Italy is strong and her claims just. There is not enough room for forty million people on the Peninsula, and one million would voluntarily sacrifice themselves that the other thirty-nine million might have a happier life.

Quis contra nos? England, which would be able to nip in the bud all Italian expansion, is on our side. The Duce, from the first movement of his Government, has been carrying on an open pro-English policy, and every question

between the two States has been settled. The visit of the English Royal couple to Rome has finally sealed this friendship; and the Spanish-Italian agreement has ranged a new adversary in the rear of France.

The Germans? We shall come to an agreement with them too. As to the question of the Brenner frontier, the Prime Minister only used such a sharp tone in order to repress their desire for expansion southwards, and not to prevent the expansion or free development of Germany in other directions.

The Little Entente, the Eastern satellite of France? We shall explode this alliance. It is but the diplomatic work of a few years, and we shall have formed such a ring round France as Edward VII once did around Germany.

And all this in complete harmony with England, who has the same aim as ours. The British lion and the Roman eagle will dominate the future. Who will be able to resist this powerful union?

Thus argued the suddenly resuscitated Italy, and with such feverish words did her youth pursue the far-off future. Newspapers, magazines, clubs, Party premises resounded with the claim for expansion. People kept on saying that the Italian population had not enough room on the Peninsula, and that Europe must understand this problem. And then the news leaked out: Mussolini was going to Africa to survey the colonies of Tripoli. The Duce would not travel on a luxurious passenger steamer, but at the head of the Italian Fleet on an armed cruiser, and he would not embark at Naples or Palermo. No, the fleet was ordered to Ostia, to the old harbour of the Roman Emperors.

Everybody felt that the journey of Mussolini meant more than a simple visit of courtesy. Everybody knew that the appearance of the modern Caesar in Africa would be a demonstration of Italian power, for had not the French Press at once started making vigorous protests?

The Duce was ready for the journey. On the 7th of April he had taken part in the International Surgical Congress, and in the assembly of medical professors from all over the world he had delivered the opening speech. At 11 a.m. he left the Catini Palace, where the Congress was in session. In the company of Dino Grandi and

Melchiori, Secretaries of State, he stepped, smiling, from the doorway on to the Capitolium Square, which was already swarming with an enthusiastic, shouting crowd.

Everybody was in a fever of excitement over the journey to Tripoli, and a burning wave of enthusiasm met the Prime Minister. The crowd broke through the police cordon, everybody wanted to see him as he stood in the doorway cheerfully talking to various people, whilst his two Secretaries of State went to look for his motor-car, which, contrary to all precedent, was not standing before the entrance.

At last Dino Grandi came up on the car, but on account of the crowd the chauffeur was unable to drive to the door. The car could not move, and so Mussolini had to walk to it amidst the acclamations of the crowd. The enormous square roared with one single cry:

—"Alalà!"

The Prime Minister was already standing before his car, he had just turned back to thank the people once more for their outbreak of enthusiasm when his swift movement was suddenly arrested.

At a distance of five steps an elderly woman of about fifty had stretched out her hand; a revolver gleamed in the sunshine, and the next minute it was fired off.

At first the exultant crowd stood aghast. What was the matter? What had happened? An attempt at assassination? He was dead? He had been killed? Terror swept the square. But when this first moment had passed, when the people saw that Mussolini remained on his feet, they flung themselves with unrestrained fury upon the old woman, and would have torn her to pieces if Mussolini had not made a sign to the policemen hurrying towards him:

—"Enough!"

Surgeons rushed down from the Congress, and a white-bearded head bent over the bleeding face: the crowd knew already that the wound was a slight one, the bullet had only stripped the skin from the side of the nose. As the motor-car started, a great storm of hurrahs rose round Mussolini. Taking his handkerchief from his bleeding nose, he waved his hand, smiling:

—"Don't be excited, nothing has happened."

From the special editions of the papers people learnt that the woman who had made this attempt was an Irish lady, named Violet Gibson, and, according to the doctors, insane.

Rome was frightfully upset. It was said that at Miss Gibson's apartments the police had found various letters and anti-Fascistic papers. They were the journals of the political exiles living in France; the revolver she had used was a Lovel pistol—made in France. Always France!

The city roared in the afternoon round the Guidoni Palace. Everybody knew that Mussolini had gone on with his daily work, immediately after the attempt, as if nothing had happened. He only interrupted it to receive the congratulations of the Vatican and of the foreign embassies.

Now he was at the Guidoni Palace, at the meeting of the Fascist Executive Committee. The general excitement made the windows tremble:

—“We want to see Mussolini. Hear! Hear!”

The Duce appeared on the balcony. A white plaster was on his nose, and his hand flashed up above the balcony with his usual energetic gesture:

“Nothing has happened. Don't be excited, the Fascist régime is not threatened by any danger. . . .”

A voice shrilled out:

—“The foreign countries!”

The reply rang back: “We'll face them. If this is the answer you have been expecting, now you have it.”

The clamour died away, the masses were again satisfied. The next morning Mussolini waved good-bye from the deck of the *Cavour*, and two days after he landed upon the coast of Africa—at Tripoli.

In 1904, in the first emotion of youth, he had been the one to blame the Tripoli expedition. To-day it was he who wanted to plant his foot upon this land; thence to start for new seas. In 1904 he proclaimed that the conquest of Tripoli was a useless thing, and he was imprisoned on account of the agitation he made. To-day he appeared in this very Tripoli, and the former young socialist agitator, the upholder of a fanatic creed, was now greeted on the coasts of Africa with a homage that might have been paid to the ancient Caesars.

In the harbour he received the reports of the Governor;

then, casting a rapid glance over the white turbans and golden eagles, he mounted his horse.

The Arab population was swarming over the hot sand. The native mayor of the city surprised Mussolini with a strange present—a brilliant Damascus blade, and a splendid golden writing-set; for "such a present was the most suitable for the man of the sword and the pen."

On the square before the Governmental palace Mussolini spoke to the Arab population. Two legions of Tripoli stood guard round his Arab steed, and the voice of the rider rang out across the desert:

—"Fascists, my journey is not a simple administrative act. My journey means the strengthening of the Italian power, which has descended from Ancient Rome. Destiny has sent us to this country. Nobody can stand in the way of Fate, and no one can break our inflexible will."

At the afternoon parade the whole Arab population turned out and gazed open-eyed at the magnificent spectacle, whilst the cannons thundered from the battle-ships over the sands of the desert.

The natives looked with superstitious fear at this figure, whose power and glory had become a legend among the Italian soldiers. The guns roared ceaselessly from the ships, the flying-machines circled and swooped high above them in the air, the troops kept marching past, the eagles glittered in the burning tropical sunshine, and on the tiny square flags the four ancient letters gleamed:

S. P. Q. R.

A young American journalist broke through the cordon, his arm raised in the Fascist fashion, and in a turbulent ecstasy of enthusiasm his voice rang out:

"AVE CAESAR!"

CHAPTER XV

THE FASCIST SOCIETY

FOR weeks the European Press talked of nothing else but of the journey to Tripoli; they either overrated or they under-estimated its significance, especially in France, where the journey of the Duce produced a great sensation, for everybody knew that the colonial aspirations of Italy could only be carried into effect at the cost of France. The friendly relations between England and Italy, the Spanish-Italian agreement, the Greco-Italian approach, were all warning and disturbing signs to the eyes of the French, who since the Peace Treaty had acted on the assumption that the control of the Continent was their business alone. Their nervousness kept on increasing when the Duce returned from Africa, and Rome received him with such dazzling festivities as it had formerly accorded to its generals when they returned in triumph. On the streets, along the walls, everywhere appeared the name of Mussolini; the shops were full of snapshots showing him walking, riding, flying, in dinner-jacket, in uniform, and in every possible position.

Foreigners shook their heads; if in Christian Rome a single man could receive such worship, one could not wonder that Pagan Rome had worshipped its Caesars as gods.

The continuation of the festivities involved a still more exciting phenomenon: this was the Colonial Day, celebrated all over Italy. On this day newspapers, placards, pamphlets, meetings, and speakers proclaimed Italy's need of colonies, in order to support her increasing population. The Colonial Day announced that Italy, having no Imperialistic tendencies, did not want more colonies for the sake of conquest, but only to serve as a vent for her superfluous population, which would build up in the new territories, by work and discipline, the new ramparts of culture and civilization.

The French Press went on protesting.

What are the Italians driving at? What does the journey of the Duce to Africa mean? And the Colonial Day? Is it a demonstration, or mere boasting of their force? The

announcement of offensive tendencies, or the preparation of the Italian nation for the moment when its hour shall strike? The excitable, active youth of Italy is fermenting. Will it be possible to check this flood?

The New Man, who was the incarnation of Nietzsche's thought that only among dangers could life mean real happiness, was much too clever not to understand that the excitement of the masses had to be appeased by soothing words, and—more effective still—by new surprises. The three and a half years he had passed in the Prime Ministerial office meant the most stirring period in Italian history. Events, men, and systems followed each other with lightning speed; to-day this one, to-morrow that one appeared, in order to give place, the day after, to other new ideas and new men.

Yesterday everybody was talking about the colonies, by to-day the head of the Government will have brought about some new event.

In June 1926 the Chamber passed a law dealing with the establishment of corporations of interests and the organizing of productive forces, thus carrying on the internal reforms of the Fascist Revolution.

In contradistinction to the Liberal State the new law did not change Society into political parties but into corporations of interests. According to the spirit of the new law the engineer wanted to get on as an engineer, the merchant as a merchant, the artist as an artist, and therefore he should not entrust the representation of his interests to the political parties dealing promises to right and left, but to those organizations which were formed from his own professional circles. The new law divided the whole population of the country into three great associations: into the national associations of employers, of workmen, and of contractors. Within these three great associations separate sub-divisions were at work, according to the various professional branches. The representatives of the industrial interests, the agriculturists, the merchants, the shipping and forwarding agents, the bankers and banks, belonged to the National Confederation of Employers. The National Confederation of Workers consisted of simple working men, technical workers, and other functionaries of industrial concerns; further, of

agricultural labourers, commercial employés, and the representatives of the interests of bank officials. Finally the National Confederation of Contractors represented the interests of the free professions, of artists and writers, and, last but not least, of artisans. The fifteen representations of interest were concentrated into these three great confederations, and these three confederations united to form the highest council—the Ministry of Corporations (Ministero delle Corporazioni). According to the law, every Italian citizen has to enter one or other of these corporations of interest. This measure ensures the co-operation of all classes and ranks in directing the life of the State.

When the engineers, the working men, the merchants, and the manufacturers have not to elect their leaders from the political parties, but from their own circles, then it is probable that they will prefer the most eminent men to represent their interests. In this way the Fascist Revolution may ensure its main principle, that "*a few chosen talents should govern the State.*"

The fifteen different representations of interests elect their leaders, who will very likely also be excellent men. The fifteen representations of interests are concentrated into three great confederations; there also the most brilliant men will stand at the head. Above the three confederations stands the Ministry.

The task of the new Ministry is—by the assistance of the established confederations—to be constantly in touch with the economic life of the country, to prevent discords, to unite the different interests from the point of view of the State, to examine, by this organization of work, the most secret workshops of economic life, and to investigate its diseases, which might in time become dangerous.

—"It is the first time in the world's history," proclaimed Mussolini, "that such a constructive revolution as ours has been brought about—a revolution which realizes, by means of peaceful work and production, the unification of all the spiritual and economic forces of the nation.

"Now, for the first time, this permanent system of fifteen great associations has been established on the same standard of equality—all being equally recognized and guaranteed by the State.

"The aim of the State is that the nation shall be strong.

The strength of the nation depends upon the tranquil and undisturbed process of work and production. The continuity of production can only be guaranteed if the State stands above all representations of interest, as an impartial, directing, and controlling organization. The State can only accomplish this rôle if it has absolute power, and therefore the Liberal State, which let loose the play of the opposing productive forces—becoming thus the cause of class war—has to disappear. Its place must be taken by a new one, which shall grasp with a strong hand the thousand ramifications of national interests. The new State proclaims discipline in the place of equality, work in the place of fraternity, duty and sacrifice instead of liberty. In this century of machines one can no longer govern nations by the aid of juridical definitions, which have failed in practical life.

"Two methods have been tried for overthrowing the Liberal State: the Italian and the Russian. The Russian—the rough and stupid attempt of Bolshevism—destroyed at one stroke the old State machinery. But it was unable to replace the smashed machinery by any other, and therefore it had to fail. The Fascist Revolution had not immediately dashed to pieces the machinery of the State, but it had gradually transformed and changed its elements. Thus it happened that Moscow was in constant retrogression, whilst Rome was getting ever farther from its starting-point."

The man who, in the autumn of 1922, seized in his hand the reins of government, was a reformer even with regard to the methods of revolution. Slowly and gradually he fought his way forwards, but the speed of his progression was constantly increasing. By producing economic wealth he got hold of parties, newspapers, and organizations one after another. He fortified the Fascist Trade Unions to such a degree that by 1925 employers declared that on the question of wages they would only negotiate with these organizations. By this decision—which meant the ruin of the Socialist Party—Mussolini was enabled to regulate wages, and by the establishment of Labour Tribunals and by the interdiction of strikes he was able to start a tranquil process of production. And now came the new step: the grouping of the whole population of

the country according to the representations of interest, which, on the one hand, aimed at completely destroying the *Political Parties*, and, on the other, at forcing people towards an entirely new mentality.

Engineers, workmen, artisans, you want your interests to be represented? Rely no longer upon politicians, who do not understand anything of your professions, and whose qualities you cannot even know, but form of your branch an association, and put at its head the most eminent man in *your* business. Then the representation of all classes is ensured, and the leaders elected from your own circles will, by constant intercourse with each other, better understand the general interest of the nation, and you—a simple man—would sooner believe one whom you know than a stranger who proclaims one idea to-day and just the opposite to-morrow.

Would this new system supply the place of Parliament? According to the leader it would do so. The modern State could not allow the luxury of its citizens being incited against each other on account of juridical fictions. The State of the twentieth century can acknowledge but one social structure: organization according to its professional branches. From this it results spontaneously that the Parliament based on the popular representation system must cease, and the Parliament of interest representatives take its place. Development must proceed in this direction—that is the teaching of Fascismus.

“We are representing a new principle in the world: the absolute and complete negation of Liberalism, Plutocracy, Freemasonry, and Democracy, all these immortal principles of 1789. Time has passed over the ideas of 1789. We do not want these rusted antiquities. We no longer want either Democracy or Liberalism; they repose in the eternal peace of death. Fascism leaves, in the cemetery of history, these prehistoric discoveries.

“What France did in 1789, that Italy is doing to-day: she proclaims a new message to the world, and so she becomes the representative of the future.”

The New Man in the Chigi Palace had pronounced a great sentence, which might echo through the centuries.

What will become of this new structure of human society? Will it develop into a machine or a paradise? Will it stop at this bold reform, or will it proceed on its road with rapidly increasing momentum? Lenin had burst into Europe, like the sudden explosion of a bomb, wrecking everything in his path; while Mussolini rushed forward into unknown distances with ever-growing acceleration.

Before the new law had been sanctioned by King and Parliament, Mussolini sent it to D'Annunzio, who had already experimented with this social arrangement in Fiume. To the poet, whose revolt at Quarnero had torn Fiume from Yugoslavia, Fascism awarded every possible honour and distinction. He received the title of Duke, he was nominated General of the Italian Air Fleet, of which he had once been the most daring pilot, and of which he had now become the Commander-in-Chief.

Since the world began a poet had never reached such a height.

But was he satisfied?

At the present time an intimate friendship exists between him and Mussolini. But after the defeat of the Fiume revolution he bore the Duce a grudge. The people still idolize the greatest Italian poet, and they bow down with veneration before his divine genius.

Yet . . .

He has withdrawn from all public appearances. He lives retired in his dazzlingly luxurious villa, among the silvery olive woods of Lake Garda and the eternal brightness of the spring. Like a new Lucullus, he watches thence Time whirling by in a mad gallop, sweeping onward the thundering chariot in which another—the new Caesar—drives with wreathed head towards the vast triumphal arch of history.

CHAPTER XVI

AND THEY GRUMBLED

UNDER the beautiful picture of Verestchagin, which depicts the retreat of the Grande Armée—the great masses of desperately fleeing soldiers—a strange inscription runs:

—And they grumbled . . .

The immense army of people of the old régime, who fled in disorder before the heavy blows of the new Caesar, could not accept in silence a triumph which would mean the death of the past and of its representatives.

The opposition which had seceded to the Aventine, the out-of-work politicians, people injured in their interests, honest and convinced followers of the old ideals, parasites who sponged upon the old régime, but to whom the new State gave no bread—they all looked at each other in utter hopelessness.

—And they grumbled . . .

In Paris the number of exiles, criminals, and proscribed persons amounted to several thousands. Anarchists and communists who had fled to a foreign country to escape their sentences, liberal and democratic politicians, the adherents of the old régime, who could not adapt themselves to the new; men who could not understand why they were proscribed if they dared to criticize the leader, men whose whole mentality stood in opposition to the fighting youth of Italy, which had got the Peninsula under its thumb.

—And they grumbled . . .

At first only newspapers appeared, which from Paris trumpeted to the world the frightful dangers of Fascismus. At first it was but a theoretic conflict, the defence of the principles of Liberalism, democracy, or socialism, and a severe criticism of the fundamental thesis of the new régime. Later on, the conflict turned into personal insults, criticism degenerated into hatred, and attacks into slanders.

The exile Press in Paris had got completely into the hands of communists, anarchists, and socialists, who published the most impossible news of the "latest offspring of the Borgias, who slaughters men and principles with

the coolest cruelty, and peers over seas and mountains with the greedy glance of an Imperialism resolved to overthrow the peace of the world for the sake of its own conquests."

—And they grumbled . . .

How easy it would be to finish with him. . . . The tyrant takes no precautions. . . . In the mornings he rides under the leafy trees of the Villa Borghese, he delivers speeches from the tops of motor-cars, while thousands of people stand around him at a distance of a few steps. Cordons and bayonets are nowhere to be seen. This dreadful man fears no one, though he should know that the ground on which he treads breeds not only love but hate. He must have heard of the statesmen of the Renaissance who used political murder as an efficient argument against their adversaries. He ought to remember the bomb which in Monza extinguished the life of King Umberto, and he ought to know that it was Caesar who, after crossing the Rubicon, at the zenith of his glory sank down in his own blood at the foot of Pompey's column.

Two attempts at murder had failed, but the third might succeed.

—And they grumbled . . .

—If they could only kill him! . . .

CHAPTER XVII

THE RIBBON OF SAINT MAURITIUS

AT ten o'clock on the 11th of September, 1926, as Mussolini was driving from his house to the Chigi Palace, at the Porta Pia a fearful explosion shook the street behind his motor-car. A rough-looking youth had thrown a bomb which had missed the window of the car by only four inches, striking instead the window-frame, whence it rebounded on to the pavement. Mussolini himself remained untouched. He called to the driver to stop.

The splinters of the bomb had wounded eight passers-by. At the shrieks of the wounded an enormous crowd quickly rushed together; they immediately seized the assassin, and he would have been pounded to pieces by a hail of fists, sticks, and umbrellas if the police had not come to his rescue.

The passenger in the car said quietly to the driver:

—"Nothing has happened. Drive on."

The car drove into the Chigi Palace. The Prime Minister went up the steps, and ten minutes after he was receiving his secretaries. A quarter of an hour later the whole of Rome had heard of the failure of the third attempt, and at noon Pope Pius XI sent Mussolini his congratulations and the blessing of the Church.

The Prime Minister accepted the message of the Vatican with bowed head. He was the first Prime Minister of Italy who had received a blessing from the Pope. His table was piled up with hundreds of congratulatory telegrams, and the foreign diplomats streamed in one after another to visit him.

Outside under his windows roared the city. The Governor of Rome had arranged a demonstration and procession in his honour. People already knew that the perpetrator was called Giannini. He had come home from France, where the attempt had been planned by exiled Italian anarchists enjoying the hospitality of that country.

France! It was always France. The police were obliged to disperse the demonstration before the French Embassy. The Duce spoke thus:

"I wish my words to be understood also by those who,

beyond the Italian frontiers, contemplate with culpable indifference the excesses of the anti-Fascist movement. The French Government will have to put a stop to the anti-Fascist agitation of the Italian exiles. France must alter her indolent attitude, for otherwise she risks breaking the friendly relations which now connect the two States, but which might be easily overthrown by such episodes as that of to-day.

"After long consideration I have decided to take energetic measures; I do not do this for my own sake, but for the sake of my nation, for the sake of the industrious Italian people, whose peaceful work cannot be disturbed by criminals. If we have been able to stop the system of general strikes, then we shall also be able to put a stop to this series of repeated attempts at murder. . . ."

The street yelled back: "Death to the traitors!"

"Yes," returned the voice of the Duce, "we shall introduce capital punishment. Hitherto they could quietly fire off their revolvers and throw their bombs, for they knew that their lives were not in danger. But I shall see whether they will have courage to risk their lives now that we shall introduce capital punishment!"

"Go home quietly, revenge will not be lacking. You know well that my words are always followed by acts."

When he retired from the balcony to his study the deputation of the Fascist Party was announced.

The Duce smiled: "They too want to congratulate me. Show them in; it seems there is no escape." The deputation entered the room, with Turati, the General Secretary, at its head.

—"The Fascist Party desires that the Duce should take better care of the safety of his person. He is very careless. He lets everybody come near him. He rides alone. He drives his car too slowly. He stops in the midst of the crowd. . . ."

The Prime Minister interrupted him:

—"I thank you for your coming, but please don't worry. I shall neither renounce my sports nor my touch with the people. I am not inclined to imprison myself. Allow me the right to remain an ordinary man. You say that I should take better care of myself? I believe that, as I have always been fortunate in escaping danger, I have already done everything that could be done. All the rest is in the hands of God."

What did Napoleon say when under the Pyramids of Egypt his materialistic doctors and philosophers proved and discussed the non-existence of God?

"The gentlemen are excessively witty," replied the Emperor, pointing to the pale, far-off stars. "But will you tell me who has created and who is preserving all these?"

Paris was revolted at the unusual speech of the Italian Prime Minister.

The French Press resented this Caesarian tone, and demanded the defence of "national honour." France was opposed to cowardly attacks, but it was not inclined to refuse hospitality to political exiles. The Italian Press retorted more sharply from day to day, but after three weeks the French Home Secretary forbade, by a special decree, foreigners from carrying on political propaganda on French territory.

Italy breathed again. But the Duce no longer cared about this "insignificant incident." He went to Livorno, there to meet Chamberlain. The eyes of Europe were fixed on the two statesmen, for only a few weeks before Briand and Stresemann had surprised the world by their friendly breakfast at Thoiry. The European Press prophesied the forming of a Franco-German alliance, and thus the conference at Livorno figured in public opinion as a counterpoise to the Franco-German understanding. So it was not to be wondered at that, after the meeting of Chamberlain and Mussolini, the Press announced the further deepening of the Anglo-Italian friendship, and foretold an alliance which was to become the directing power of world politics. They said that the two statesmen wished to include the Germans also in this alliance, in order to tear them away from the French. . . . And actually . . . on the 29th of December, 1926, the Italo-German pact was formed in Rome; and this contract paralysed the only success of the French Foreign Office—the agreement at Thoiry. Who would have believed this only two years before?

Meanwhile the Duce went, at the end of October, to Bologna, where in 1926 the anniversary of the Marcia su Roma was to be celebrated. Fifty thousand blackshirts were crowded on the new sports grounds, and fifty thousand rifles were raised simultaneously when the Duce appeared on horseback, in his Commander-in-Chief's uniform and with a black cap adorned with a heron's plume.

The next day Mussolini opened a scientific congress, and then, in the company of Dino Grandi, the Foreign Secretary, he drove to the station to leave Bologna. The city gave an enthusiastic farewell to the leader. His car was covered with a shower of flowers, flags fluttered, and hearty hurrahs arose wherever he passed along. Between the Via Riccoli and the Via Indipendenza, at the moment when, coming to a corner, his car was driving more slowly, a sudden crack interrupted the ceaseless ovations of the crowd. A stubby little man, standing at a distance of a few steps from the car, and between it and the line of troops, raised his revolver to fire upon Mussolini. Instead of ducking, the Prime Minister remained in his former position and shouted to the chauffeur:

—"Stop!"

Dino Grandi, who during the first attempt also had been at the side of Mussolini, turned now in terror to the Prime Minister:

—"Are you wounded?"

The Duce rose to his feet in the car, and his voice rang out to the public:

—"I am uninjured. Nobody need lose his head!"

At the first moment the crowd did not understand what it was all about, for amid the deafening acclamations the crack of the revolver could scarcely be heard. They only learnt that an attempt had been made when, from the second car which followed that of Mussolini, Balbo, the Secretary of State, and Ricci, the M.P., flung themselves with lightning speed upon the perpetrator, preventing him from firing off his revolver for the second time. The crowd sprang with resistless fury upon the boy, and by the time the police had arrived they had already finished with him.

Forty stabs with poniards and bayonets pierced his body, and if Balbo had not prevented it they would have impaled him in the open street.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister's car pursued its way to the station, and it was only now that the two men found time to look at each other after these exciting moments. Dino Grandi cast a glance at the breast of Mussolini and discovered the traces of the shot. The bullet had gone through the ribbon of the Saint Mauritius

Order, and luckily had glanced off from the massive metal of the great cross. "I had never seen the Prime Minister so cheerful as after the failure of this attempt," said Dino Grandi in an interview. At the station he talked unaffectedly to the officers who knew nothing of the attempt, for the Duce did not refer to it by a single word.

Before leaving the town the Prime Minister sent the following dispatch to Arpinati, the leader of the Bolognese Fascio:

"I want to express in this way also my joy and satisfaction at the wonderful demonstration of yesterday. I shall never forget this spectacle. I believe that in the history of Italy there has never been a closer alliance between the Government and the nation. There was no precedent to such a mighty review of an armed nation. The forest of rifles darkened the sun, and I could hear the breathing of the countless throngs. The criminal episode of the last moment cannot stain the glory of this magnificent day. I send you the bullet and the pierced ribbon of Saint Mauritius; preserve them among the Fascist mementoes of Bologna. To all of our comrades I want to tell one absolute truth: Nothing can happen to me until I have finished my task."

At the news of the fourth attempt such a storm arose throughout the whole of Italy that its outbreak could hardly be suppressed. The fury of the Italian temperament destroyed newspapers, printing offices, party premises, and the revolted Fascists proclaimed that a regular conspiracy was hidden in the background of the Bologna attempt. The mere fact that the perpetrator of the crime—Anteo Zamboni—was only a sixteen-year-old youth, who of himself could never have hit upon the idea of committing an assassination of such importance, sufficiently proved that conspirators had used and sacrificed this unfortunate young fellow for their contemptible schemes. On the Franco-Italian frontier the demonstrations were repeated, and the windows of the French Consulates were broken. Every soothing word was in vain; the police were obliged to disperse the infuriated crowds by force. The blood of many dead and wounded stained the pavements before

order could with great difficulty be restored. But the waves of excitement rose yet higher, and swept over to France, where, around the person of Riciotto Garibaldi, a disgraceful scandal broke out. The Fascist Party, and especially its General Secretary, Turati, clamoured in Parliament for ruthless revenge. The hundred and twenty M.P.s of the Opposition, who had not entered Parliament for two years, were deprived of their mandates; a law, inflicting capital punishment for all attempts upon the life of the King, the Hereditary Prince, and the Prime Minister, was passed, and the establishment of a political police was ordered by a special decree.

The head of the Government, who, on the occasion of his lucky escape, was again congratulated by the Pope and the King, gave the following motives for the introduction of capital punishment:

"We introduce this punishment in order to preserve the tranquillity of the Italian nation. Those young men, who have hitherto obstinately persisted in their habit of practising target-shooting upon my humble person, are greatly mistaken if they believe that they can intimidate me. This supposition is simply ridiculous. No force can prevent me from carrying out my task to the end."

In the eyes of his adherents the person of the leader already began to be surrounded by a halo of invulnerability. He rose to the grandeur of a legendary figure of personal heroism. The Pope sighed: "After this attempt, it seems that Providence has taken the Prime Minister under its special protection." And the people began to believe that this man could not be reached by the hand of criminals.

The first time they tried to shoot him down with a trained gun, the second time the bullet grazed his nose, at the third attempt the bomb rebounded from the window-frame of his car, and now, at the fourth attempt, the ribbon of his order was pierced exactly over his heart.

What did he say to the congratulatory deputation of the Fascist Party?

"The bullets glance off me, and Mussolini remains uninjured."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CORN CONFLICT

WHAT has been the most beautiful triumph in the life of Mussolini?

When Italy won the Battaglia del Grano (Battle of Wheat).

At the beginning of 1926 Mussolini had already begun to proclaim that the greatest hindrance to Italy's reorganization was her need of greater imports. She had no iron, no fuel, and too little corn. Iron and coal, it is true, can only be given by Nature, but corn can be produced by human industry. The agriculturists must produce more—was Mussolini's slogan—or we shall starve.

With him words have always been followed by actions. The bloodless war began. Within one year forty-eight thousand tons of improved seed-corn was distributed by the Government, and four hundred and a half million cwt. by the agricultural organizations of the Fascists.

Three thousand new motor-ploughs cut into the soil, ten thousand model farms were formed expressly for the cultivation of the wheat crop, nine hundred stations for corn selection were established, and, as it seemed instantaneously, three hundred new schools were built to teach the popular science of wheat improvement. The Ministry of Finance lent three million lire to the farmers, but under strict control, in order that it should only be utilized for the raising of wheat. In the streets and railway stations striking placards proclaimed the corn conflict, they spurred people to work by premiums of ten thousand lire. For three years, in the midst of most important State reforms, the Duce had always found time to use the magic force of his word to press the ploughshare deeper and deeper into the mellow furrows of the soil.

In the first year of the Battaglia del Grano such splendid results were already reached that the victory might be called a decisive one. Wheat production increased by one million two hundred thousand tons; in that first year on five million hectometres of arable land the wheat crop amounted to six million tons instead of four and a

half millions, the average production of the country thus being raised by more than four cwt. per hectometre.

It was in the Costanzi theatre at Rome that the Italians celebrated this great triumph over their land problem. Instead of ladies and gentlemen in evening suits and frocks, sunburnt peasants sat in the boxes and stalls. It was not petty actors and actresses who stood on the stage, but silent wheat sheaves, over which the proud inscription shone, "The Italy of King Victor Emmanuel III has been again triumphant. She has won the Battle of Wheat."

Paolo di Cesare, a simple peasant from Abruzzo, stood before the Duce. In his hand he held an imposing sheaf of wheat:

—"I am a simple Italian peasant. I lost my only son in the war, but I am glad that I was able to offer him for my Fatherland. In the name of all the Italian agriculturists accept from my hands, Duce, this sheaf of wheat. This is the true triumphal banner of Italy."

The Duce spoke thus to the assembled agriculturists:

"Do you realize the immense importance of your victory? The deficit of the commercial balance of the country amounts to eight milliard lire, and half of this sum is bestowed upon the import of corn alone. This deficit must completely disappear. I will give you everything you need, but I beg you to carry on the work you have started. Show that Fascism is not a phrase, and that my words are not mere empty sounds but a practical reality. Next year give me thirty million cwt. more wheat and I will show you that not merely a piece of bread will fall daily to every Italian but a whole loaf.

"Exert yourselves, and next year bring me thirty million cwt. more wheat, then our victory will be complete. Then we shall be able to say that we have defeated even our worst adversary—Hunger.

"I am glad that I can take my place at the head of this glorious movement, which has already shown incomparable results. The Battaglia del Grano has proved that there is still faith in the world, faith which is invincible and will-power which is able to overcome every difficulty. Take up the work afresh, toil with straining muscles, and shout aloud to all the world—but specially to those dry-brained, materialistic prophets who proclaim that the

world is only governed by materialistic forces—shout that among the moving forces of life and history there is a power greater than all, holier than all, the power of our will, the will of man, which can overcome every hindrance.

“Will you go on with your work, then, Italian labourers?”

And the answer was roared back from every side :

—“We will ! We will !”

CHAPTER XIX

"IL CANTO DEL LAVORO"

AN intimate friend of the Duce said of him once:

"To Mussolini every hindrance is but a spring-board whence he can jump further."

It would seem as if there were something in this statement. The way in which he confronted the old problem, which throughout the history of Italy had always given most trouble to her politicians, is a sufficient proof of his noble resolution never to evade difficulties. The question of how to feed Italy's prolific population had generally been one to which the leaders of the State could give no answer. The Consuls and Generals of Ancient Rome stumbled and failed over this point, and the Ministers of Modern Italy did no better.

Whether Mussolini is to be successful in solving this hard problem is still a question of the future. But the answer he has been giving is clear and sound, plain and simple: "Work to the uttermost." In 1928 the total wheat crop of Italy amounted to six million two hundred thousand tons. But it is not the particular result which really matters. This has but a particular interest and a local importance. In the long run it is not immediate practical success which forms the true ambition of the Duce, for he has resolved that this movement, this revolution of his, shall become a second Renaissance of the Italian soul. The regeneration of the *entire* character of the nation by the will-power and the creative faith of a *single* man: this is the real essence of Fascism, giving to its history an interest and an importance far beyond the frontiers of Italy.

Mussolini has exalted work, which has been generally looked upon as a hard necessity, if not a punishment; he has exalted work in all its forms and activities to be the highest ideal of a nation. It has never been an easy job to make an ideal of a necessity, but Mussolini has succeeded in giving to his nation the collective intoxication of ceaseless activity, the joy of creation instead of the isolated pleasures of individual life. Now every Italian feels himself growing with his country.

But it is a matter of course that where work is the

first and last word of a great movement there the hindrances to this work must be seriously dealt with, and, if possible, they have to be eliminated, whatever the effort may cost. And in this sense one might call Fascism a gigantic struggle against the hindrances to production. No doubt in this struggle many a spring-board has presented itself to Mussolini, but as he has overcome the difficulties in agricultural production, so is he trying to overcome the difficulties in production in general. He has said, "Work to the uttermost," and as a natural consequence of this, he has to create the possibilities of work to the uttermost.

The vast experiment of bringing the greatest possible efficiency, economy, and order into production has found its expression in the famous *Carta del Lavoro*, published by Mussolini and accepted by the Great Council of the Fascists on the 21st of April, 1927. The *Carta del Lavoro* is a summary of the Fascist principles and directing ideals with regard to a new organization of the State. It has sketched the outlines of future development, and given instructions as to the lines on which this development should be carried out.

Of course the significance of the *Carta* is not a mere theoretical one; many of its clauses have already passed, or are to pass, into law. In contradistinction to former revolutions it is one of the most interesting qualities of Fascism that it has adapted some of the methods of the natural sciences. It first observes, and only then does it formulate laws, though other revolutionary movements have always preferred to take the opposite course. No doubt the leaders of Fascism have also formed social hypotheses to arrange and co-ordinate facts, but nothing indicates that they try to confound hypotheses with laws. Fascism works with practical facts and experiments, and it is always the case that a number of experiments have to be made in order to prove the rightness of a theoretical conception before it can be expressed as a law. During a career of only a few years the great Italian Fascist movement has already achieved surprising results, and it would seem as if the secret of its success did not lie in the elasticity of its principles, but rather in the elasticity of its methods.

The first chapter of the *Carta* deals with the organization of the corporate State. It defines the character and authority of those new institutions and judicial organs which have been established by Fascism in order to collect, to represent, and to discipline the professional interests of the country. For the most part the principles expressed in this first chapter have already been realized in the law which has regulated the collective relations of work.

The two leading ideas of the *Carta del Lavoro* are declared and emphasized in the first two paragraphs. They state the supremacy of the nation over the individual, and the domination of work over the whole existence of civilized mankind. The second paragraph proclaims that work, whether mental or technical, is a sacred duty; it also declares the unity of production from a national point of view, wherefore particular interests have to be subordinated to this unity, which comprehends both the welfare of the individual and the development of the power of the nation. Many collective contracts of work have proved how deeply the Italian working classes have been impressed by the above ideas. Actual facts have shown that Italian Labour is able to subordinate its aims to the higher interests of the entire production of the country.

The further paragraphs of the *Carta* deal with the organization of the syndicates and their authority. The *Carta* proclaims that the forming of syndicates and professional unions is free, but that only judicially recognized syndicates may represent certain classes and branches of interest, and only these syndicates have a right to draw up and sign collective contracts of work, which have an obligatory force upon all concerned. The Fascist legislature has granted unprecedented functions and rights to the syndicates, and thus it has become necessary to define the precise and strict limits of their authority.

The co-operation of the different social classes has found its expression in the corporations. They show best that the syndicalist movement of Fascist Italy has firmly refused the principle of international class war. Instead of a blind, disastrous struggle Fascism wants to induce a condition of constant but fruitful tension. The syndicates

no longer fight against the State; on the contrary they are promoted and developed, but also ruled and disciplined, by it. The corporations are higher bodies connecting the various factors of production. The different syndicates of employers and the syndicates of workers have to select *equal numbers* of representatives, and these representatives of the employers and workers form together the corporations, at the head of which is a representative of the State itself.

There are six great corporations, which correspond to the six chief groups of production and to their twelve confederations. But besides these six great corporations others can be formed for special branches of production. The corporations are but at the very beginning of their development. Their constitution has not yet been completely worked out, but their aim has been defined, and that is to promote, to assist, and to encourage every initiative which strives at the better regulation, organization, and greater efficiency of work.

According to the sixth paragraph of the *Carta del Lavoro* the law recognizes the corporations as special organs of the State. These special organs are to become the bases of the new political and economic order in Italy.

Further, the *Carta* declares that the corporate State considers private initiative as a most efficient and useful instrument in the service of national interests. Only in such cases, says the *Carta*, may the State interfere with economic production, when private initiative is lacking, or proves to be insufficient, or when the political interests of the State are at stake. Of course, that is rather a vague definition, or, to be more precise, it is a definition which leaves a very free scope.

At present one cannot tell what may be the result of the legal right, which in certain cases has been granted to the corporations, to interfere with private production by means of control, encouragement, and even direct management. But the principle of such a legal right has undoubtedly been justified by the actual necessities of modern industrial life. The State can no longer evade those complicated problems and significant phenomena which have been created by modern industrialism. Even in England, the native land of Individualism and Liberalism,

the Government—impressed by the enormous damage of the Great Strike—has thought it necessary to restrain both the liberty of employers in suspending work and dismissing workers and the liberty of Labour in organizing strikes. In Germany the Government has also been obliged to interfere and to ensure the observance of contracts or agreements by the exercise of its own authority. Thus the Fascist method, which aims at embracing the entire domain of production, and at gradually building up for it a complete system of legislation, seems to be much more logical and up-to-date than the isolated individual measures of other "liberal" States, dozing in a sort of comfortable nonchalance.

The Fascist State needs no longer sporadically to interfere with serious controversies between workers and employers, for it has a special instrument for settling all controversial questions. It is the fifth paragraph of the *Carta del Lavoro* which deals with the Labour Councils. By means of these Councils the State is enabled to settle and regulate all controversies concerning the observance of valid agreements or fixed conditions of work. The Cassandra prophecies of certain people, who declared that the Labour Councils and Tribunals would always range themselves on the side of Capital, have already been disproved by many an adjudication where the Tribunal has entirely adopted the standpoint of the workers.

The Fascist statesmen, it is true, have to display the greatest care, attention, and tactfulness in the carrying out of the corporate system. But besides the elasticity of its methods the Fascist movement has another striking quality: it is a *revolution* where the idea of *evolution* prevails. This may seem a contradiction in terms, yet very probably the great social transformations of the present and the future will, for the most part, be marked by this characteristic. The most famous revolutions of the white race took place at periods when the leading idea of evolution had not yet become a predominant note in human thinking. In past centuries the ablest reformers owed their failure to the fact that they were unaware of the general law of evolution in nature, or at best they had but an instinctive feeling of it instead of knowledge.

From the time when this general law of evolution was first clearly recognized and formulated Fascism has been the first revolutionary movement to aim at creating entirely new social and economic relations by means of a gradual and rhythmic development.

The Russian Revolution broke out owing to too high a tension under desperate conditions, and thus it could not take the same road. Bolshevism came into power with ravaging force, and it blindly destroyed everything old, everything which stood for capitalism, or seemed to do so, till at last the Bolshevik leaders found themselves obliged to rebuild with great difficulty all that they had ruined by their hasty precipitation. In contradistinction to this, Fascism has always proceeded step by step, but it never goes back on what it has once declared. Slowly but steadily it has transformed and adapted the old institutions and fitted them into its own system. With regard to its origin and aims Fascism is *revolutionary*, but the means it employs are evolutionary, and it is by this singularly wise and successful combination that Fascism has achieved such unprecedented results within a few years. Only by the vigour of such a combination has it been able to become the most constructive revolution in the history of Europe.

The parity between the two factors of production forms the basis of the Fascist economic system. This parity has found its expression in every social institution of the new régime, but especially in the corporations. Yet the corporate system is deeply rooted in ancient Italian traditions. New as it may seem to foreigners, it is not lacking in continuity. Particularism has always prevailed in the history of Italy. In many respects the new order is only a return to the guild system of the Middle Ages and the corporations of Ancient Rome. Besides the socialistic representatives of the syndicalist ideal, there were also other precursors of Fascism, such as the noted Latin thinker and humanist Pope Leo XIII, who in his *Rerum Novarum* Encyclical, published in the year 1891, gave the outlines of Fascist ideas on social organization.

The second chapter of the *Carta del Lavoro* deals with the collective contracts of work. These contracts, created

by modern industrial development, have hitherto not been judicially regulated by the European States. The Fascist legislature has been the first to make a statute of rules, according to which collective contracts have to be drawn up. The *Carta* lays down the leading principles for such a complete and fundamental statute to regulate collective contracts. It declares that wages must correspond to the normal conditions of life, to the possibilities of production, and to the profits of work. But it gives no other general rules, for it assumes that wages should be defined by the collective agreements of all the parties concerned. The Fascist legislature does not want in the least to destroy the elasticity of economic life. It only aims at giving due guarantees and a precise judicial form to the collective contracts of work.

By harmonizing the results of work with the conditions of life and the possibilities of production, the *Carta* has given a proof of the soundest common sense. Instead of vague, idealistic promises expressed in the catchword, "Everybody is to get what he wants," the Fascist syndicalism has proclaimed the attainable principle of giving everybody what his work is worth—though it is not always an easy job to decide in such a matter.

The socialist education of Mussolini, or rather his socialist tendencies, are most evident in the clauses which deal with the *minimum guarantees of work*. When we are told that hitherto, in the International Labour Conferences, the envoys of the workers have long been demanding in vain all those measures for public welfare which have now been carried out in their integrity by the *Carta* and the subsequent legal instructions, when we know this, then we shall have some idea of the enormous importance and efficiency of Fascism with regard to these questions.

Every guarantee is now given to the worker to back and secure him in his work. All the complicated questions of indemnity and compensation, yearly holiday and weekly rest, dismissal of workers and term of probation, working day, overtime work, piece-work, etc., have found their regulation in this part of the *Carta*. According to the legal order only a collective contract of work, containing precise instructions on the above questions, can be approved and ratified by the magistracies.

The leading rules in the chapter on the minimum guarantees of work include the interests both of industrial and mental workers from the same standpoint. This may also be reckoned as one of the results of Fascism.

The next chapter of the *Carta* deals with the question of Labour Exchanges. The Fascist legislation has at last solved this complex problem. It has established separate Labour bureaux for the different professions. These offices are directed by committees equally representing the Trade Unions and the employers, but their control is in the hands of the State itself by means of the corporations. Every unemployed worker has to be registered at these Labour Exchanges.

By the establishment of State Labour Exchanges the whole question of the distribution of Labour is organically regulated, but all private agencies and bureaux have been abolished. Thus Italy has accepted the legal abolition of free Labour Exchanges, which formed one of the demands of the Washington Conference.

The five last clauses of the *Carta* comprehend the whole of the problems which refer to the welfare, the education, and the civilizing of Labour. The raising of the moral, material, and technical standard of all producers is one of the aims which have an inspiring force upon Fascist endeavours. The raising of the technical standard is of paramount interest for production, but it can only be attained by a widespread amelioration of the moral and material conditions of Labour. The twenty-fifth paragraph of the *Carta del Lavoro* declares that the principle of co-operation finds its supreme expression in care for the public welfare. Employers and workers have equally to bear the burden of those institutions which aim at promoting the general weal of all the productive elements. Here the *Carta* has seized and worked out to its fullest importance an idea which is destined to play a leading rôle in the future history of human society.

The man who was the first to think of insuring people against the material misfortunes and calamities of human life was as much of a genius as the man who was the first to think of a lightning conductor. It is impossible to insure people against mental tragedies, but it has been a great triumph to avert at least the full force of material

blows from the individual. The rational development of mankind tends ever more towards the idea of insurance, and it is one of the greatest merits of the *Carta* to have assigned a predominant importance to this social movement of modern times. The *Carta del Lavoro* aims at perfecting accident insurance, at promoting and enlarging the scope of maternal insurance, at establishing insurance against tuberculosis and various diseases connected with certain professions, which is but the first step to a general insurance against all diseases.

Further, the *Carta* proposes to insure the entire population of Italy against all kinds of forced unemployment, and to introduce special forms of insurance for young workers. Of this vast programme a great deal has already been carried out, as, for instance, the insurance against tuberculosis. Fascist Italy has learnt to help herself.

Besides the insurances, the new system is bestowing much care upon the institutions of Dopolavoro. These correspond to the Labour Clubs of Soviet Russia. It is not too daring to say that Fascist Italy shows nearly as much devotion to her Dopolavoro as does her Bolshevist antagonist to its Labour Clubs. There the workers can find everything they long for after their work: sports, entertainments of all sorts, open-air movies, broadcasting, amateur theatres, art studios, libraries, and so on. But there is also much done to further the scientific and political education of Labour. Lectures are given on various subjects, and everything is done to satisfy and excite the cultural ambitions of the Italian workers. The greater the development of the Trade Unions the more will the Dopolavoro flourish for the benefit of the whole of Italy.

These are, briefly, the outlines of the *Carta del Lavoro*—the great reformatory work of Fascism. What remained of the empire and glory of Napoleon? The story of an overwhelming personality and the *Code Napoléon*. What will remain of Fascism? At present who can tell? But two things are sure to echo through the centuries: the story of another overwhelming personality and the *Carta del Lavoro*.

"What France did in 1789, that Italy is doing to-day:

she proclaims a new message to the world." This message shines nowhere more brightly, more brilliantly, than in the *Carta*. By the force of his great soul alone Mussolini has succeeded in creating a new moral and political Italy, and now by the force of his keen mental powers he will bring about entirely new economic and social relations in his adored country, or—it would seem—even in the whole of Europe.

On an October day of 1922, to the strains of a fiery march, the Roman eagles were borne along by the Fascist legions. To the sounds of this march youth and courage, spring-tide and beauty, took Ancient Rome by storm. For six heroic years the triumph of the force of youth over a decaying past exulted in the rhythm of the *Giovinezza*. But in the seventh a new hymn arose: *Il Canto del Lavoro*. The magic genius of Mascagni gave the music of *The Song of Work* to his country; Rossoni and Bovio wrote the verses, which reflect the whole spirit of Fascist Italy; and it was in the mausoleum of Augustus, the father of all the Roman Emperors, that the sounds of the new hymn floated for the first time over the ancient stones of the Urbs.

Was not this combination symbolical? A great representative of the free unruly spirit of the old artistic Italy, two poets of the new Fascist creed, and the silent eternal mementoes of the sacred city—they were all united and harmonized in the praise of work, they all exulted in the fever of creation.

Like the beloved figure of young Siegfried, an awakened nation sings its sublime song of work, pulsates with the heroic rhythm of creative effort, whilst forging its sword of future power. "La Patria non si nega, la Patria si conquista"—"The Fatherland is not to be denied; it is to be conquered"—thus run the last words of the *Canto del Lavoro*. It is the supreme, the definite truth of Fascism. Mussolini knew it, but one wonders if it was ever recognized by Napoleon or any other great conqueror. Their nations were only inspired to conquer other countries, but never to begin this glorious campaign with the Fatherland itself.

It has been left for Fascism to utter the strange new words: first of all, conquer your own country. The Condottiere has become a Caesar, but the Caesar has again

become what the New Man has always been: a worker and a teacher by words and deeds. Wherever the road of Fascism may lead, this road will be constructed on a firm basis, for the head of Young Italy is a man who dreams in realities. And there is no better reality for all nations than that of their own strength.

"The Fatherland is not to be denied; it is to be conquered." Napoleon could never have said these words, and it would seem as if this had been his fatal tragedy, for he was a man without a fatherland (Corsica had altogether ceased to mean this for him), and thus a man without limits, lacking in the sense of reality, rushing now to Egypt, now to Russia, sweeping over Europe in a passion of megalomania, but all the time unheeding of the great reservoir of his strength—France.

But it is a different matter with the paramount dictator of the twentieth century. Mussolini has deep roots. He has an innate feeling for his country, its past and its present, and therefore the demon of all unrestrained temperaments cannot have such power over him as it had over Napoleon.

The great conqueror of post-war Europe has not begun by fighting against other nations, but by fighting for his own nation. And that is a bolder task. Till now he has only given confidence and energy to his country, and he is exhausting his own soul and body, rather than drawing his faith and force from others. Thus one may presume that, in spite of certain analogies of character, the career of Mussolini will greatly differ, not only in its beginnings, but also in its results, from that of Napoleon.

"The Fatherland is not to be denied; it is to be conquered."

This is the great idea which unites forty million Italians. This is the first step to fighting out a mighty future, and this is the force which makes belief in that future possible. Happy is the land which can hear the throbbing of its heart in the sublime song of youth and work. Happy the land which can see the embodiment of its high ideal in its leader himself. Happy the land which enjoys the great rhythm of human life, the spring-tide of youth, and then the full summer of work—man's work.

CHAPTER XX

THE POPE AND THE DICTATOR

HAND in hand with his grand reforms of social and economic life Mussolini has been carrying through a bold and striking foreign policy. The various pacts of friendship with the surrounding countries form the visible results of this policy, and its direction may perhaps be indicated by certain expressions in the speech Mussolini delivered in Parliament on the 27th of May, 1927. In this speech he declared that, according to his opinion, the years 1935-40 would be of a decisive character in the history of Europe. Italy must be ready to arm five million men at any given moment; therefore the organizing of armed forces must be carried on with the greatest energy.

The Duce aims at securing Italy's hegemony over the Balkan States, and, what is more, over the Mediterranean. In three years he has succeeded in isolating Yugoslavia—the Adriatic adversary of Italy and one of the strongest satellites of France. Italy has signed pacts of friendship and arbitration with nearly all the States which, in the Great War, belonged to the Central Powers. On the 29th of December, 1926, was signed the pact with Germany; on the 5th of April, 1927, with Hungary; in November 1927 with Bulgaria. Italy has been the first among the members of the Entente to recognize the unstable and impossible state of things which the Peace Treaties have created in the whole of Central Europe and in the Balkans. And she has not hesitated for a moment to avail herself of the serious political mistakes committed by the Peace Conferences.

Italy's influence over the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula grows daily stronger. The basis of this influence lies in Albania, the neighbour of Yugoslavia. Though Albania is but a slip of a country, she may be of decisive importance in the future of the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore all the Great Powers have always been very anxious to secure for themselves the protectorate over the romantic land of the Black Mountains. It is Mussolini's Italy which has won in the race for Albania. At the end of 1926 a pact of friendship was signed between the two countries.

This pact secured to Italy the protectorate over Albania for five years. But on the 22nd of November, 1927, Italy and Albania became still more closely united by an offensive and defensive alliance for twenty years.

It has also been left to the political genius of Mussolini to discover in the infamous mutilation of Hungary a most important factor in Central European politics. No question of the further development of the Danubian States can be solved until Hungary has found her place in the sun. The Little Entente is only held together by its fear of Hungary—the country which forms both the political and the geographical centre of the Danube Basin. Unless the absurd and unjust settlements of the Peace Treaty of Trianon are altered, this part of the Continent will remain a constant menace to the whole of Europe. It has been a matter of course that Italy should find in Hungary a natural ally of great vital force and proven loyalty. For a thousand years the two countries were connected by constant commercial, historical, and scientific intercourse; the Great War ranged them for the first time in opposing camps, but soon after the war they found out that their aims and interests were one.

Within seven years Hungary made her way from the black desperation of Trianon to the dazzling festivities of the Capitol, where was signed her pact of friendship with Italy. The fraternity and sincere friendship between the two nations have found many expressions during the last three years, and those interested in the situation of the Balkan States can clearly recognize that the Italo-Hungarian alliance marks the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the Balkan Peninsula.

Mussolini has also signed a pact of friendship with Rumania, and in March 1927 Italy ratified the Besarabian agreement. The pact of friendship and arbitration with Greece was the last link which closed the ring round Yugoslavia. Although Mussolini pursues an Imperialistic policy with regard to the Balkan Peninsula, hitherto the most friendly relations have existed between Italy and England. Nay, one cannot remember that England has ever granted such colonial concessions to any country as she has to Italy. The motive for this new attitude may perhaps lie in the fact that at present England is not in

the position to concentrate her fleet in the Mediterranean, and thus she must be assured of the assistance of Italy in maintaining the passage of that sea. Otherwise the great oil roads of England would be in danger.

In addition to these imposing results is the reconciliation between the Quirinal and the Vatican, by which Mussolini has achieved his latest political master-stroke. For sixty years the antagonism between the Holy See and Italia Unita was a rankling thorn in the national life of Italy. Mussolini has pulled it out, and by doing so he has won for himself the sympathies of the whole of the Catholic world.

The political treaty of peace between the Holy See and the Italian State was signed in the Papal Hall of the Lateran on the 11th of February, 1929. This political treaty recognized the principle of the temporal sovereignty of the Pope. In addition to the peace treaty, Mussolini and Cardinal Gasparri have also come to a financial agreement with regard to the compensation of the Holy See for the lost Papal Dominions. Further, a concordat of forty-five clauses has regulated the ecclesiastical and religious questions between the Church and the Italian State. On the 12th of February, the seventh anniversary of the coronation of Pius XI, High Mass was celebrated in St. Peter's Cathedral, where thousands of enthusiastic Catholics assembled to do honour to the "Libre Pope." Outside, on St. Peter's Square, vast crowds waited patiently in the pouring rain for the papal blessing. The Fascist groups of Rome were all represented, and when at last Pius XI appeared on the balcony the rapture of the crowds knew no bounds.

The great moral force and tenacity of the Holy See had finally overcome the opposition of its political adversaries, but the ecstasy of the Italian nation over this victory reflected rather the triumph of the Dictator—Mussolini. For more than a thousand years Rome has enjoyed the privilege of being the capital of a world religion. By the reconciliation between the Church and the Italian State the Ancient Roman pride has been again exalted. This is the great inner significance of the Italian Concordat, but its international importance must also not be overlooked. No doubt, as a statesman, Mussolini

has been fully aware of the efficacy of the Church with regard to the Italian colonial policy. Pope Pius XI has pushed forward missionary work to the front place in Catholic effort. The support of missions, missionary education, and ethnographical researches are all energetically promoted by the present Pope. But it is also a matter of course that missionary activity should have the greatest importance for States with colonial interests. The converting and educative work of the Church in the non-Christian parts of the world has never been so intense as it is now. The Concordat between the Italian State and the Vatican has opened new perspectives both for the Pope and the Dictator. They have re-established the intellectual unity of their country, but they have also before them an enlarged scope for expansive activity. The one aims at propagating the Catholic religion, the other at advancing the power of the Italian State. The Pope sees the Cross glimmering over fresh territories of Christendom, the Dictator sees the Italian tricolour fluttering over new lands and new colonies. And these two together form a mighty alliance.

Though the Church stands above all nationalities, the Colonial Powers have always competed with each other in protecting missions. Even non-Catholic or non-clericalist countries, such as France or Germany, have always been very anxious to further missionary activities. At the time of the political régime of Clemenceau the wildest anti-clericalism prevailed in the home policy of France; nevertheless the French Foreign Office persisted in its rôle as protector of the colonial missions. The cultural and political importance of this question may perhaps be illustrated by the curious coincidence that the French Senate passed a law regulating the position of the clerical orders and partly compensating them for their lost property at the very time when Mussolini was dealing with the solving of the Roman problem and drawing up the Treaty of the Lateran, which expressly mentioned that, with regard to the seven hundred and fifty million lire paid as compensation by the Italian State to the Vatican, the Holy See had decided to bestow them upon the promoting and strengthening of missionary centres. Where the priest can advance, there the Italian citizen can

follow, by the right of cultural, religious, and, last but not least, economic work.

At the end of 1926 Pierre Dominique, the French writer, had already said of Mussolini that he intended to overthrow the results of the French Revolution by a Catholic International, and that he aimed at establishing a new Roman Empire.

A Roman Empire, a Catholic International? Are they but the phantasies of the French writer, or are they the actual and well-thought-out plans of a gigantic imagination? Who can tell? At all events the French have reason enough to be nervous. The Italo-German pact has paralysed the agreement of Thoiry, the Spanish-Italian pact has ranged a new enemy at the back of France. The Italo-Rumanian agreement has destroyed the unity of the Little Entente—the Eastern watchguard of French foreign politics. The Italo-Albanian alliance has severely injured the prestige of Paris in the Balkan States, and it has secured Italy's preponderance on that eternally fermenting Peninsula. The way from Tirana—the capital of Albania—may even lead to Constantinople.

Whether the attitude of Italy towards France be hostile or not, at all events the position of the former is firm and well established on the Mediterranean and in the Balkans. Albania, the Land of the Black Mountains, forms the centre of Italy's Eastern policy, which involves both the interests of Hungary and those of Bulgaria. The pacts of commerce and friendship between Greece and Italy, the many signs of Turco-Italian sympathy—these things all prove that the Little Entente has found an effective counter-weight in the Italian "Concern." The ring round France is ever tightening; the Anglo-Italian diplomacy is rapidly carrying out the policy of isolation which proved so successful and efficacious before the Great War. North and South, East and West, the frontiers of France are threatened by foreign bayonets—the bayonets of four not over-friendly States: England and Germany, Spain and Italy. Is it a wonder if Paris is getting seized with panic, and if its diplomats are proving unable to follow the swift daring of Mussolini, who within a few years has worked his way up to the first line of world politics?

On the 24th of March, 1929, the world had a brilliant

proof of what Fascism means for Italy. This 24th of March was in the highest degree satisfactory to the Duce and his movement, for the events of this day put an end to the calumniations of the enemies of Fascism. On this historical date the Italian nation decided, *by secret ballot*, whether or not it approved of Mussolini's policy, and of the list of members of the new corporate Parliament which had been drawn up by the Great Council of the Fascists. About nine million electors gave their vote, 92 per cent. of the Italian electorate. By secret ballot 8,650,750 people voted for Fascism and only 136,198 against it. This overwhelming result of the plebiscite has completely silenced the clamorous adversaries of the Duce. The sceptics have no reply to this imposing confession of faith, for the whole of the world must now see that it is a united and unanimous Italy which stands for Mussolini.

When the Fascio had been formed ten years before there had been but a few to rally round the Milanese journalist. When by the Marcia su Roma this journalist took over the power, the army of his adherents was still in the minority. But seven years have sufficed him to create out of this minority a new Italy. He has found the soul of his nation, and his nation has found its soul in him. No doubt the Treaty of the Lateran exercised a great influence upon the issue of the elections, and it was a clever trick to have the treaty published but a few weeks before the plebiscite. After the 25th of March it became clear to every one that Mussolini had not only succeeded in bringing about an evolutionary revolution, but also in presenting the world with the unprecedented phenomenon of a *constitutional Dictator*. It would seem as if the combination of these two were the limit, even for a Mussolini.

On the 20th of April, 1929, King Victor Emmanuel opened the new Corporate Parliament of Italy. The King began his inaugural speech with a quotation from the opening speech which his grandfather, Victor Emmanuel I, had delivered on the 27th of November, 1871.

"After long trials Italy has at last found herself, and the way that leads to Rome. Here in this place, where after a dismemberment lasting for centuries the Italian nation unites for the first time, everything speaks of the

greatness of the past, but everything also reminds us of our duties. We have reconquered the position which is due to us in the world, and we have defended the rights of the nation. The national unity has been re-established, and on the threshold of a new epoch we are resolved faithfully to uphold our principles."

During this speech two deep, burning eyes were fixed on the King; and then their tragic gaze surveyed the Fascist Parliament, the serried ranks of fervent adherents, and the galleries of the foreign diplomats; gazing at all this brilliancy, as once they gazed at poor peasant boys, shabby revolutionists, sweating soldiers, and worn-out labourers. But all the time, whether their glance fell on misery or magnificence, these two dark eyes have really seen but dreams—the boundless dreams of a great soul. And the child Benito dreamed of the same ideal as does the grown-up Benito called Duce. The child cut in the bark of trees the name of his ideal—Rome; and the Duce wrote it in the Treaty of the Lateran, calling this ideal of his life—Sacred Rome.

"It is only now that Italy has taken possession of Rome," said the Duce in his curious and interesting speech on the Treaty of the Lateran. Those who, on the 13th of May, had the opportunity of hearing Mussolini's great speech, were once more fascinated by the sincerity and inflexible firmness of this bold statesman.

"We have not resuscitated the temporal power of the Pope; on the contrary we have finally buried it.

"Free and sovereign Church, free and sovereign State.

"One must understand that it is the question of two clearly defined sovereignties, completely separate yet mutually recognizing each other. But in the State the Church is neither free nor sovereign. It is not sovereign and it is not free, for with regard to its members and institutions it is subject to the general laws of the State and to the special stipulations of the Concordat.

"Free and sovereign Fascist Italy has loyally recognized the Catholic Church, voluntarily granting it certain privileges, but at the same time every other religion has its complete recognition."

Though the Italian Chamber loudly applauded when Mussolini mentioned the strong Italian feeling of the

Pope, it could not have been very congenial to the latter to hear himself glorified as an Italian patriot, in place of being venerated as a conception standing above all races and nationalities. The Duce delivered a eulogy on the Pope, but nevertheless he clearly expressed the firm resolution of the Fascist State to make no compromises with respect to the ambitions of the Church.

"The Holy Father is a learned man, whose deep religious feeling is coupled with great scientific knowledge. He knows very well the loyalty of the Fascist Government, which gives what it can, neither more nor less, but which always acts with sincerity and conviction, despising all mental reservations.

"The Holy Father knows very well that there are certain questions on which the Fascist Government shows as much inflexibility as the Holy Father himself. Such is the question of the education of the younger generation."

Between the Fascists and the Vatican there are great differences of opinion with regard to the Catholic Boy Scout movement. Even the secret negotiations which preceded the drawing up of the Concordat reached a serious crisis over this point. The Young Fascist organizations and the Catholic Boy Scouts are proving incompatible. But on this matter neither the Pope nor the Dictator would yield. The Fascist Government aims at following the example of Sparta:

"The family education desired by the Church no longer corresponds with the spirit of modern times. At present the education of the younger generation can only be carried on by the State.

"The Fascist Government of Italy is firmly resolved to supplement the religious education by the furthering of strength and manly courage."

And then:

"We despise all hypocrisy; therefore let us openly call our education by its right name: it is a military education. One must not be afraid of the word."

The Chamber applauded him enthusiastically; for they felt once more with certainty that the man who stood in the centre of that great hall was born to be a Caesar, one who never bowed his neck, one who kept

his ground, in the face of every kind of power and splendour. It was not before the glory of the Papacy that he would kneel, but before that poor, bleak symbol of human endurance and human heroism—the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

CHAPTER XXI

R O M E

THE foreigner, who looks at this dazzling career from a certain objective distance, seeks in vain the crest of the highest wave in this eternal rhythm of struggle and movement. The present writer, who has been rushing through this wonderful life, feels that this career—if it is not destined to be suddenly interrupted—is but at its very beginning. The thinker questions the future in vain, the author cannot write the last chapter.

Whither is this mad gallop leading? Where and how will this career end—the boldest, the most stirring of the last hundred years? Whither does he sweep his nation along, and what will be his influence over the destiny and development of the world? At present who can tell? Followers emerge and swarm around his figure, those lesser Mussolinis: the Primo de Riveras, Hittlers and Pilsudskis, the Pangalos and Valois. They are generally but weak and soulless imitators of a political movement which could only lend them its official uniform but refuses its higher qualities: the fresh pulsation of national forces, the new structure of human society, and, last but not least, the man of genius, who is more than a politician, more than a Prime Minister. Nay, more than a man of genius, for he is a hero of steadfast work and will-power, a real and actual hero of the twentieth century.

This New Man aims at transforming a nation of forty millions into his own image. There is no problem of national or individual life which he cannot contact and refresh by his own creative force. The revolutionist is cutting his way to the future, sword in hand; the politician is welding together classes and parties by ardent national feeling; the statesman is working ceaselessly for the continuity of production; the sociologist embraces all classes equally in his schemes, he is reorganizing human society according to its trades and professions, and is endeavouring to create the parliament of the modern State by introducing the system of the representation of interests instead of general popular representation. Caesar became the man of destiny in European history by conquering Gaul and

thus laying the foundations of a new Europe; Mussolini has also proved himself to be a man of destiny by stemming the onrush of Bolshevism upon his continent. Can one wonder if there is to-day no more exciting phenomenon in European politics than the man who, at the head of a nation of forty millions, rushes towards an unknown future?

What will be his destiny, what will be his fate? The bullet and dagger lurk in wait for him, the soothsayers warn him of the ides of March, and the youthful *élan* of his Government has to overcome ever-growing difficulties. Anxiety looms over this great festival of success and splendour: is not hyper-production driving his gigantically inflated industry to a crisis? Is he to live for decades to fortify the bold reforms of social and public order by the work of a quiet and peaceful epoch? Or is he to crown and destroy them by a triumphant campaign? Will this man be a Frederick the Great, one who revives and consolidates after his wars and battles, a Napoleon who leaves complete chaos and disorder after the brilliant splendour of *gloire*, or will he be a Caesar who, after attaining the zenith of his power, has to pass away in the fullest radiance of his glory, abandoning the completion of his work to a new Octavian?

The bust of Julius Caesar gleams in white marble behind his writing-table. That man conquered the world and had it snatched away from him; for the second Caesar—Napoleon—nothing had remained but a mole-hill—Europe. For the third Caesar there is but one country—Italy. Will this satisfy a temperament so greedy for conquest?

According to G. B. Shaw the greatness of Shakespeare consists in having for centuries deprived all other dramatic authors of every theme. Will the great artist of the political drama be contented with merely leaving no new idea for the politicians of his century?

ROME!

This is the faith which is driving him forward on the bold career of youth, this is the secret of his dazzling success. The bony Calmuc face which stared out upon the world from the red nights of the Kremlin was not able to triumph on the soil where the naked statues of Venus and Apollo shine under the brightness of the sky, and

where the Cross glimmers triumphantly over the ancient torsos. When instead of the dull slogan of a proletarian internationalism the New Man gave as his symbol the glory of Ancient Rome, then the black darkness of the Kremlin vanished in the brilliant brightness of the Capitol. This watchword of Ancient Rome was the greatest promise which a politician could ever utter in Italy.

ROME!

This word is the all-embracing force which holds together the political and social institutions of Fascism, this is the programme beside which every other idea and movement must fade. Rome, the glory of Ancient Rome, inspires and drives that vast crowd which swarms round the figure of the New Man. Is it a Utopia? During the past centuries many millions of people have died for this Utopia; from Alaric and Charles the Great, from the Hohenstauffs and the Habsburgs, down to William II, it has always been the ambition of barbarian tribal chiefs and of powerful monarchs to put before their titles the attribute—*Roman*. This Italian Peninsula ruled over Europe for twelve centuries, and during those twelve centuries volcanic talents have periodically emerged from its burning soil: the self-sacrifice of the Scaevolae, the daring of the Scipios, the character of the Gracchi, the effervescent energies of Marius, the cold severity of Sulla, the temerity of Lucullus, the overwhelming good fortune of Pompey, the piercing force of Caesar, the vast brains of Augustus, and the gigantic measures of Trajan.

The Urbs ruled over the world, and found time even in the ceaseless tumult of battles to give birth to Ulpianus and Cicero, Catullus and Vergil, Seneca and Horace. In Europe there was nothing to contend with this Empire; only the East could overthrow it, the eternal East with its infinite plains, where empires of ten thousand years still flourish, and where nations of four hundred millions slumber. Only the East could overcome this power—the Faith which started from the pale waters of Gennesaret, and the sword which flashed from the hand of Attila into the midst of Europe like a thunderbolt from grim and lurid clouds. Was it a wonder if the barbarian conquerors of the North could not forget this empire, was it a wonder if they strove to re-establish it at all

costs? And is it a wonder if, after escaping a slavery of twenty centuries, in the twilight of a declining epoch the new Italy should flame up once more, remembering that past which can never be forgotten by the Europe of our times?

ROME!

Is this word but an eager desire, or a practical goal? Is it a belief which the genius of the New Man has launched for his nation to arm it against all foreign influences, all internationalism? Will it inspire a great nation to fight out its future, or is it only a Utopia, an illusion, which will sweep the country along, down a fatal path?

The New Man, who has rushed through the old ideas and systems with the triumphant force of youth; the Condottiere, who has fought out his battle, sword in hand; the modern Caesar, at whose magic word have arisen waving seas of golden corn, behind whose Roman legions are ranged a forest of factories, steamers, and aeroplanes—there he stands at the head of his troops, and in the sultry tension of a collapsing Age urges on his vast army with the order:

—“If I go forward, follow me; if I yield, kill me; if I die, avenge me.”

INDEX

- Abd el Krim 230
 Academy, Royal Italian 228
 Africa 233, 235
 Alaric 274
 Albania 263, 264, 267
 Albertini, Senator 190, 191, 228
 Alfa-Romeo Car 218
 America, 202, 223-224, 229
 America, South 218, 229
 Amundsen 227
 Angelini 55
 Ansele 78
 Anselmi, Lieut. 48
 Antonius 109
 Arditì, The 112, 118, 121, 122, 123,
 135, 136
 Argentine, The 218
 Arminius 100
 Arpinati 247
 Attila 274
 Augustus 100, 261, 274
 Australia 227, 229
 Austria 73, 77, 78, 79, 83, 86
 Austro-Hungarian Army 100, 105-106
Avanti, The 54, 56-57, 59-61, 66-67, 69,
 71-72, 74, 78-79, 81, 83, 86, 120,
 131, 220, 223
Avvenire del Lavoratore 37

 Babeuf 31, 32
 Bacci, Giovanni 67
 Balabanoff, Angelica 46
 Balbo 246
 Balilla, The 228, 229
 Balkans, The, 263, 264, 267
 Banca Commerciale Italiana 196
 Banca Italiana di Sconto 196
 Banca Nazionale di Credito 196
 Barboni 36
 Barella, Giulio 173, 175
 Battaglia del Grano 249, 250
 Battisti, Cesare 77
 Beethoven 52, 62
 Belgium 77, 78, 80
 Berchtold, Count 86
 Bersaglieri, The 48
 Bessarabian agreement 264
 Bianchi, Michele 163, 164
 Bismarck, Prince 20
 Bissolati, Leonida 66, 67, 110
 Blanqui 84
 "Blueshirts" 159, 195
 Bolchon 126
 Bonomi 66, 130-131, 155, 169
 Bonservizi 215
 Borgia, Cesare 50, 153
 Bottai, Giuseppe 11
 Bovio 261
 Boy Scouts, Catholic 270

 Brazil 218
 Breda Factory 218
 Brest-Litovsk, Treaty of 104
 Briand 245
 Bulgaria 263, 267
 Bülow, Prince 86

 Cabrini 66
 Cadorna, General 100
 Caesar 31, 40, 44, 82, 109, 135, 150, 159,
 169-170, 230, 242, 272, 273, 274
 Caillaux 223
 Canada 229
 Canova 184
Canto del Lavoro 261
 Capello, General 220
 Caporetto, Battle of 99, 101-103, 105,
 107
 Carabinieri, The 120
 Carducci 29, 43, 50
 Carduni, Catherina (grandmother of
 Benito Mussolini) 56
Carta del Lavoro 11, 253-261
 Cassalini 212
 Catherine of Russia 41
 Catholic Religion 187, 193, 266
 Catullus 274
 Caviglia, General 137
 Celere, Count Macchi di 108
 Central Powers 74, 263
 Cesare, Paolo di 250
 Chamberlain 245
 Charles the Great 274
 Charles XII 184
 Christ 43, 94
 Cicero 104, 274
Class-War 52, 56, 58-59, 66
 Clemenceau 110, 266
Code Napoléon 260
 Collective contracts of work 257-258
 Colleoni 40, 153
 Colonial Day 235
 Condé 183
 Corfu, expedition 210-212
 Corporate Parliament 268
 Corporations, The 254-257
 Corporations Ministry 11, 237
 Corradini 159
Corriera della Sera, 190, 216, 217, 219, 228
 Corvinus, Mattias 184
 Curzon, Lord 202-203

 Dalmatia 107-108, 115, 134
 Dante 28-29, 108
 D'Annunzio, Gabriele 79, 83, 110, 123-
 124, 133, 136, 137-139, 240
 Descartes 183
 Diaz, General 106-107, 183
 Dominique, Pierre 267

- Edward VII 231
 Engels 51
 England 108, 202-203, 211-212, 230-231, 235, 255, 264, 265, 267
 Entente, Little 231, 264, 267
 Entente, The 78, 81, 86, 186-187, 263
 Facta 155-156, 160-162, 164-166, 172
 Farinacci 149, 171, 212, 217, 220, 228
 Fascio formed 113-115
 first battle won 120-121
 defeated at elections 126
 campaign against socialists and communists 130-137
 emblems 135
 wages civil war 139
 victory 142-143
 success at elections 147
 pact with the socialists 148
 breaks general strike 157
 assemblies at Naples 162
 seizes North Italian towns 165
 rises throughout Italy 171
 Marcia su Roma 172, 177-181
 demobilized 182
 police 187
 milizia 195
 Fascist Labour Syndicates 205, 207, 223
 Fascist Trade Unions 134, 156, 238
 Federzoni 159, 183, 195, 216, 220, 228
 Federzoni-Corradini Party 195
 Feminism 224
 Fénelon 184
 Ferrero 139, 170
 Filippelli 216
 Fiume:
 annexation question 107-108, 110, 115
 occupation 123-124, 125, 137-139, 240
 France 46, 80, 108, 110, 202-203, 211, 215, 223, 230-231, 233, 235, 239, 243-245, 248, 260, 262, 263, 266, 267
 Francis Ferdinand 72
 Francis Joseph 72, 77
 Frank 78
 Frederick the Great 184, 273
 Garibaldi 19, 31, 32
 Garibaldi, Riciotto 248
 Gasparri, Cardinal 265
 Gaul 169, 230
 Germany 77-78, 81, 85, 186, 231, 245, 256, 263, 266, 267
 Giampaoli, Mario 219
 Giannini 243
 Gibson, Violet 233
 Giessi 75
 Giolitti 59, 60-61, 131-132, 137-138, 143-144, 146-149, 151-154, 169
 Giommi, Gino 55, 61, 64-65
Giornale d'Italia 60
Giovinezza, The 136, 142, 172, 184, 261
 Gladstone 20
 Goethe 184
 Gracchi, The 174
 Grandi, Dino 151, 169, 172, 231-232, 246-247
 Greece 210, 235, 264
 Guicciardini 86
 Guild System 257
 Gustavus Adolphus 184
 Händel 184
 Harun al Rashid 23
 Haydn 184
 Heine 58
 Heraclitus 69
Hierarchy, The 154
 Hindenburg 104
 Holy See 265-266
 Horace 274
 Hugo, Victor 184
 Hungary 7, 263-264
 India 227
 Insurance in Italy 260
 International, Catholic 267
 Internationale, The 56, 85, 113
 Isonzo, Battles of 92, 96, 98
 Italo-Albanian Alliance 264, 267
 Italo-Bulgarian Pact 263
 Italo-German Pact 245, 263, 267
 Italo-Hungarian Pact 263-264
 Italo-Rumanian Pact 264, 267
 Ivan the Terrible 41
 Japan 218, 227
 Juarez, Benito 21
 Kaiser, German 80, 82, 85
 Kellermann 67
 Kemal Pasha 153
 Kemechey, L. 7-9
 Kepler 184
 Kerensky 99
 Klopstock 52
 Kossuth, Louis 20
 Kremlin 47, 135, 143
 Kulischoff, Anna 60
 Labour Clubs 260
 Labour Conferences, International 258
 Labour Congress 60
 Labour Councils 256
 Labour Exchange 259
 Labour Tribunals 226-227, 238, 256
 Lassalle 31, 32, 42, 47
 Lateran Treaty 265-266, 268-269-270
 Lausanne Conference 202-204
 League of Nations 114, 211-212
 Lenin 46-47, 99, 111, 113, 119-120, 129, 135, 240
 Leo XIII, Pope 257

Libya 61, 66, 134
 Liebknecht 47
 Livorno Conference 245
 Lucullus 240, 274
 Ludendorff 104
 Luxembourg, Rosa 121

 Macchi 126
 Machiavelli 34, 39, 50-51, 52, 64, 65,
 73, 116, 128
 Mackensen, General 86
 Malatesta 128
 Maltoni, Rosa (mother of Benito Musso-
 lini) 21, 25-27, 29-30, 33, 48-50,
 57, 95
 Mangarini, General 174
 Marcia su Roma 172-180, 219, 245, 268
 Marinetti 118, 121, 126
 Marius 31, 109, 274
 Marx 31-32, 37, 42, 68, 70, 86, 225
 Mascagni 261
 Matteotti 215, 217
 Maximilian, Emperor 21
 Mazzini 93-94, 108
 Melchiori 242
 Metternich, Prince 49
 Michelangelo 40, 184
Momento, The 60
 Mortara, decree of 122
 Mozart 184
 Mussolini, Alessandro (father of Benito
 Mussolini) 21, 23, 25-26, 29-31,
 33, 35, 48, 50, 56-57, 95, 175
 Mussolini, Arnaldo (brother of Benito
 Mussolini) 22, 25-26, 174, 209
 Mussolini, Benito:
 born 21
 boyhood 22
 enters cloister 25
 appointed teacher 30
 goes to Switzerland 33
 joins Bersaglieri 48
 death of mother 48
 Editor of *Class-War* 52
 imprisoned 64
 Editor-in-Chief of *Avanti* 67
 resigns 82
 supports war 83
 Editor of *Popolo d'Italia* 83
 goes to front 91
 wounded 97
 forms Fascio 113
 writer and dramatic author 151
 breaks general strike 157
 assembles Fascists at Naples 162
 Coup d'Etat 171
 Prime Minister 174
 Marcia su Roma 177
 visits King 179
 forms government 182
 visits Switzerland for Lausanne Con-
 ference 202
 sends expedition to Corfu 210

Mussolini, Benito—*continued*:
 attempts at assassination 219, 232,
 243, 247
 organises Labour Tribunals 225
 forms Balilla 229
 visits Tripoli 231
 organises corporations of interest 236
 goes to Livorno Conference 245
 organises Battaglia del Grano 249
 publishes *Carta del Lavoro* 253
 foreign policy 263
 signs Lateran Treaty 265
 gets absolute majority at plebiscite
 268
 Mussolini, Luigi (grandfather of Benito
 Mussolini) 56

 Napoleon 30, 31, 67, 82, 84, 150, 159,
 184, 245, 260, 261-262, 273
 National Confederation of Contractors
 237
 National Confederation of Employers 236
 National Confederation of Workers 236
 National Guards 195
 Nietzsche 34, 42, 43, 51, 52, 125, 152, 236
 Nitti 122, 128, 130, 131, 153, 155, 189
 Nobile 227
 Northcliffe, Lord 83

 Octavianus 109
 Orlando 106-108, 122, 161, 164, 214
 Oviglio 183

 Paoli 31
 Papal Dominions 265
 Papini 138
 Pareto, Wilfredo 42, 145-146
 Pascal 183
 Peace Conferences 107-108, 230, 263
 Peace Treaties 104, 123, 202, 235, 263-
 264
 Peter the Great 41
 Petöfi, Alex. 68, 184
 Piave, battles of 101, 104-105
 Pinedo, De 227
 Pitt 183
 Pius XI, Pope 141, 243, 248, 265-266,
 270
 Plebiscite, Italian 268
 Podrecca 66, 126
 Poincaré 202-203
 Pompey 109, 169, 183, 274
Popolo d'Italia 83-84, 87, 97, 101, 110, 114,
 118-119, 121-122, 129-130, 137,
 139, 143, 145, 148, 171, 174, 209

 Quirinal 179, 193, 265

 Rapallo, Treaty of 137, 189
 Ratti, Achilles (Pope Pius XI) 141
Rerum Novarum Encyclical 257
 Revel, Admiral Thaon di 183
 Ricci 246

- Rossi, Cesare 121, 216
 Rossoni 261
 Ruini, Mario 139
 Rumania 104, 264, 267
 Russia 41, 44, 47, 99, 104, 124, 186, 260, 262
 Russian Revolution 81, 99, 238, 257

 Salandra 164, 169
 Salesian Friars 25, 29
 Sandro 97
 Sarfatti, Margherita 170
 Scaevola, 274
 Scipio 183, 274
 Seneca 274
 Serbia 73
 Sforza, Foreign Minister 131, 137
 Sforza, Muzio 19
 Shakespeare 273
 Shaw, G. B. 273
 Simonetti, Capt. 48-49
 Sinigaglia 50
 Sonnino 86
 Sorel, 34, 42, 52, 66, 70, 125, 128
 Soviet in Italy 121-122, 129, 137
 Spain 267
 Spanish-Italian agreement 231, 235, 267
 Spengler 8
 Stefani, Alberto di 183, 198-199
 Stoppato 65
 Stresemann 245
 Strike, General 157
 Sturzo, Don 128-130, 154-155, 161
 Suardo 225
 Sulla 109, 274
 Sumatra 227
 Switzerland 33, 35, 46, 95, 202-204

 Tasso 184
 Tchitcherin 104
 Tisza, Count 75, 86
 Toscanini 126

 Trajan 274
 Treves, Claudio 56-58, 60-61, 66-67
 Trianon, Treaty of 264
 Triple Alliance 73, 87
 Tripoli Expedition 60-61, 64, 233
 Mussolini visits 231-233
 Trotsky 46-47, 129, 143
 Tsar of Russia 99
 Turati 244, 248
 Turati, Filippo 60-61, 142
 Turenne 183

 Ulpianus 274
 Umberto, King 242
 "Unknown Soldier" 96, 183, 271
 "Utopia" 71, 81

 Vandervelde 43-44, 78
 Varus 100
 Vatican 193, 233, 243, 265-266, 270
 Vecchi, Di 121, 169
 Verdi 40
 Verestchagin 241
 Vergil 28, 274
 Versailles, Conference of 108
 Versailles, Treaty of 123
 Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy 66, 97, 100, 106, 122, 143, 159-160, 161, 164, 165, 172-174, 177, 179-180, 186, 248, 250, 268-269
 Victor Emmanuel I 268
 Volpi, Count 223

 Washington Conference 259
 William II 273
 Wilson, Woodrow 107-108, 110-111

 Yugoslavia 107-108, 240, 263-264

 Zamboni, Anteo 247
 Zamboni, Colonel 220
 Zini, Professor 38

